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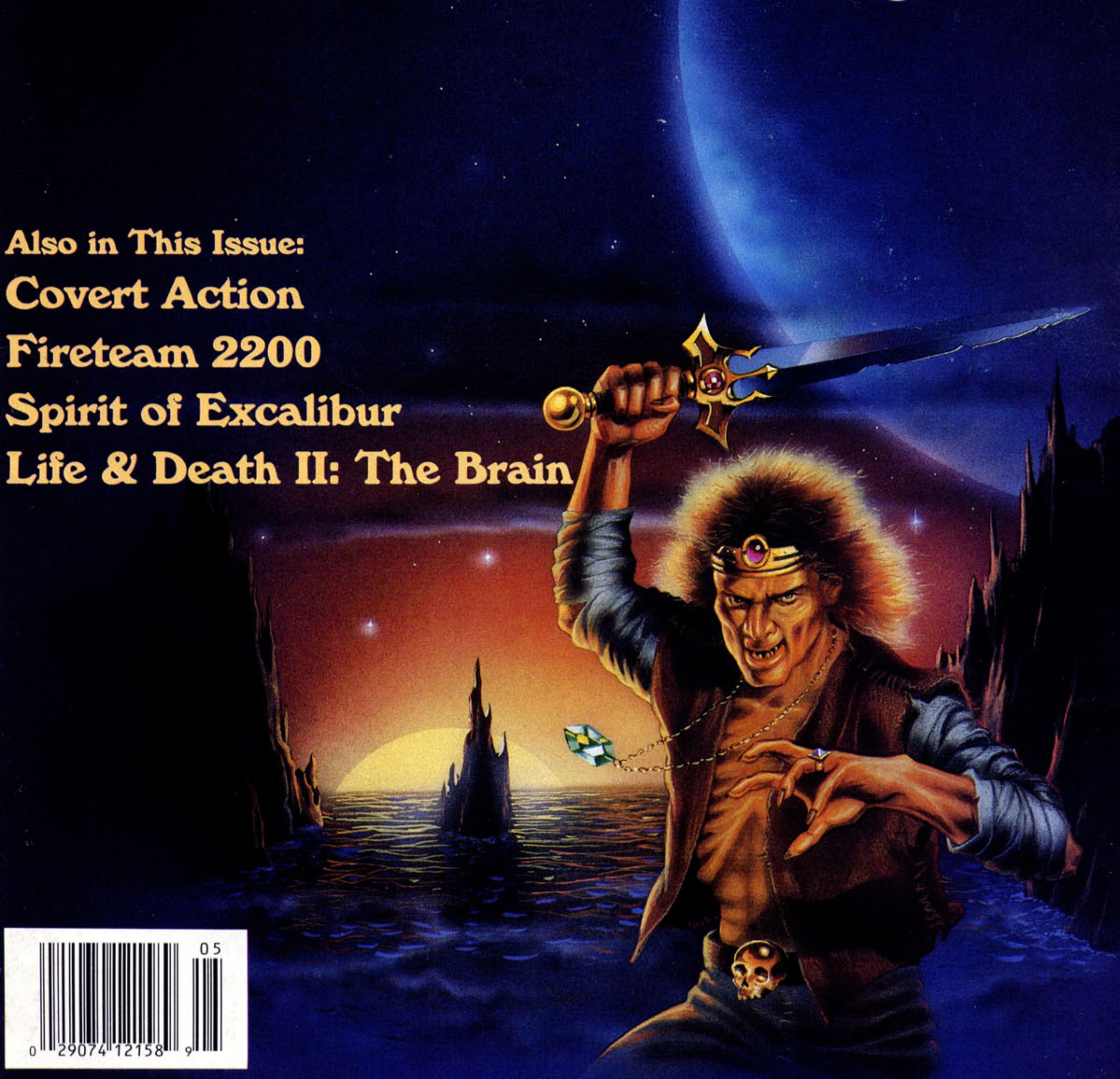
May 1991

Elvira ● Das Boot ● Battle Chess II

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Definitive Computer Game Magazine

New World's *Might and Magic III*



Also in This Issue:

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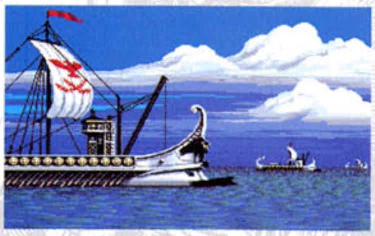
• *Kellyn Beck on* •

THE S·E·C·R·E·T·S OF CINEMATIC ADVENTURES



Let's go back in time. All the way back to about 275 BC. Civilization exists only in small pockets like Rome, Greece and Egypt. The rest of the world is a vast terra incognita, peopled with strange and dangerous barbarians. You are a young Centurion, sent with your legion to subdue marauding tribes of the Alps.

What would such an adventure be like?

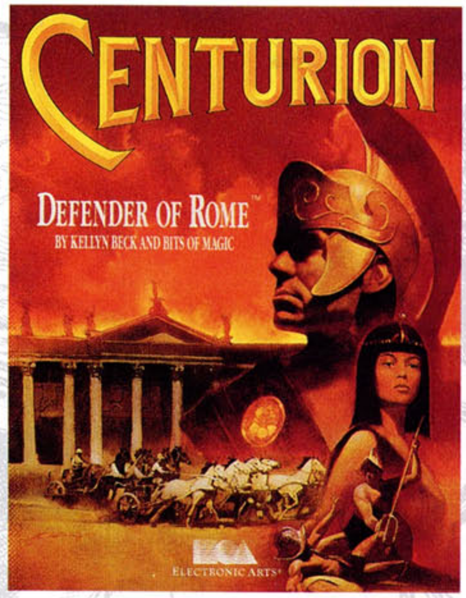


That's the premise of Centurion: Defender of Rome™, a new cinematic adventure, where you don't just watch the story unfold, you **control the action**. You'll race chariots in the Circus Maximus, sail fleets of ancient warships across the Mediterranean, compete in gladiator shows in the Colosseum, seduce the voluptuous Cleopatra and lead Roman legions into battle at the edge of civilization.



In Centurion, rich images of a time long ago are brought to life with cinematic techniques. I began exploring the uses of cinematic techniques in Defender of the Crown™ and Rocket Ranger™. But as great as these early cinematic adventures LOOKED, they lacked the addicting involvement and interactive levels of great computer games. The "cinematic" part was complete. The "adventure" part was in its infancy.

The cinematic adventure has finally grown up. We used every last one of our secrets in making Centurion. It's all there: great graphics, cinematic editing, strategy, and depth of gameplay that players now demand.

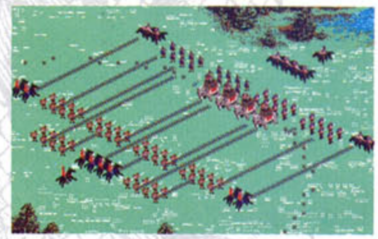


Take Centurion's chariot racing scene. We planned out every scene the way a filmmaker would shoot it. You see your chariot enter the Circus Maximus and pass in front of a packed grandstand. The "camera" cuts to an aerial shot of the track and zooms in for a close-up of your chariot. Suddenly the race begins. You hold the reins as you charge around the track, whipping your opponent and trying to shatter his chariot.



We even added a fully-orchestrated musical soundtrack. We asked award-winning film composer Jon Newton to work his magic with sound boards. The pounding drums and blaring trumpets bring out the drama of each event.

But we wanted to go beyond cinematic appeal. We wanted to create an environment that's different each time you play, one that doesn't have the usual pre-determined path. Like our land battle. You control the action and create your own winning strategies. You direct the movement of each infantry and cavalry unit. You send your general into the fray to bolster your troops' morale. Retreat. Charge ahead. Outflank. Even form a wedge. But your enemies are "smart" and unpredictable. They'll adapt to outwit your previously successful strategies and present you with new challenges each time you play.



Cinematic graphics and great game play. This is what makes Centurion the first complete cinematic adventure.



It took my group, Bits of Magic and Electronic Arts® three years to bring the epic world of Centurion to life. I sincerely hope you'll enjoy your journey back in time to the world of ancient Rome. (Here's one last secret: Save the Parthians for last. They can tear you to pieces.)

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games for Ten Years

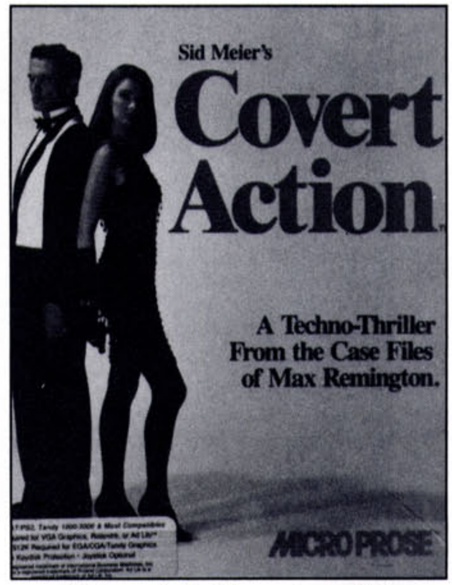
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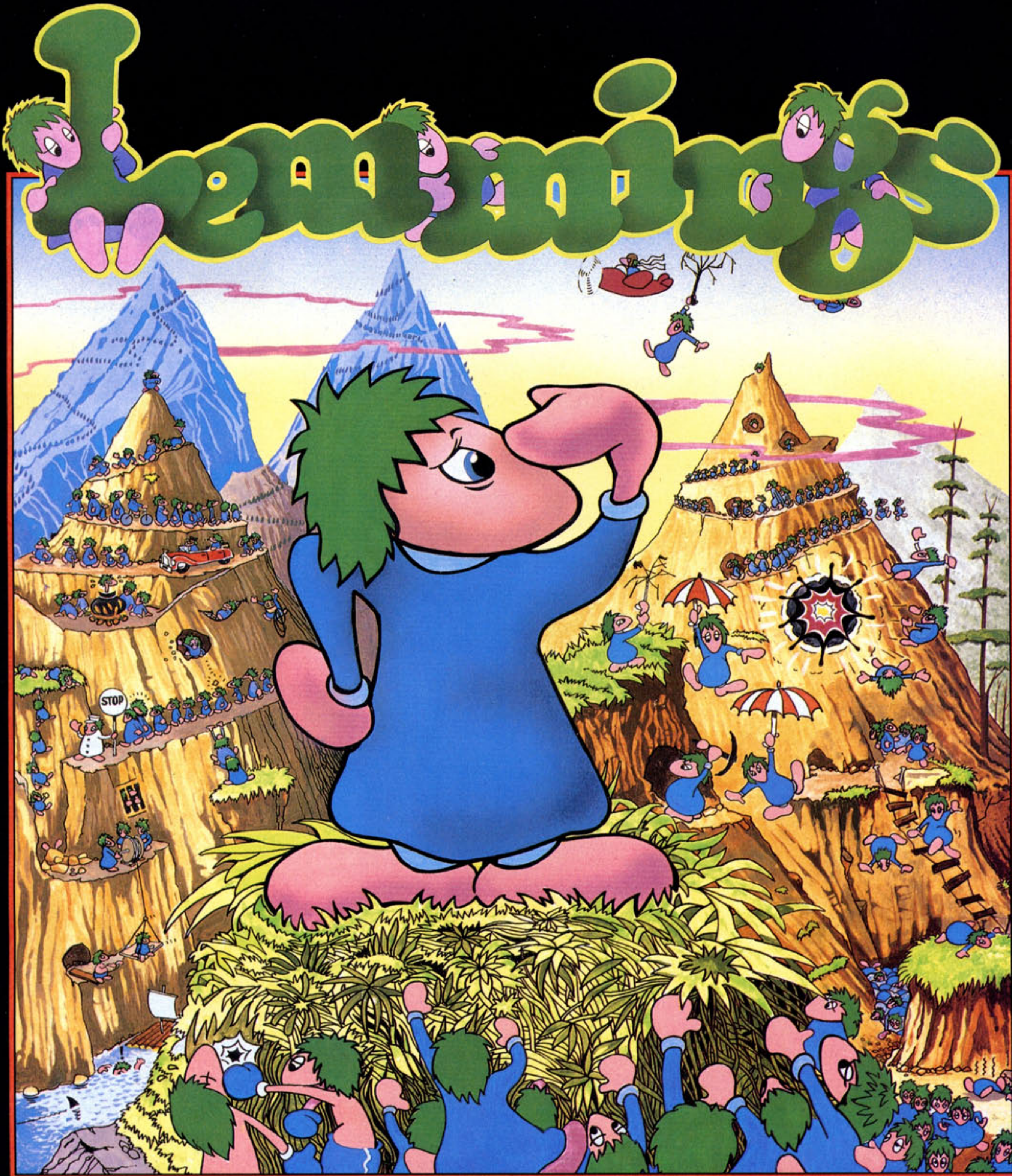
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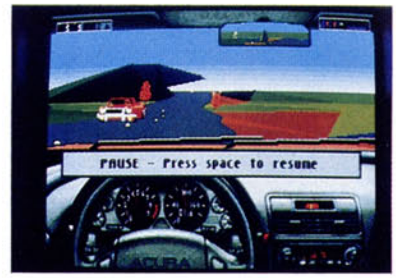
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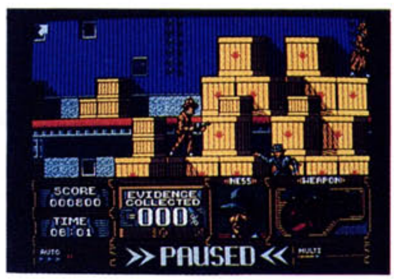
Road & Car (Add-on Disk #1)



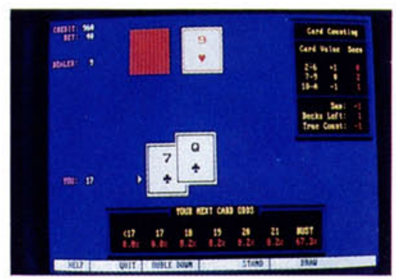
Air Strike USA



Nightbreed



The Untouchables



MicroAce Blackjack

Accolade
San Jose, CA

JACK NICKLAUS PRESENTS THE GREAT COURSES OF THE U.S. OPEN: There's a title that says it all. This is the fourth in the popular series of add-on disks for those who enjoy puttering around with *Jack Nicklaus Golf.* This one adds the courses of Pebble Beach, Oakmont and Springfield, New Jersey. IBM ($21.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

TEST DRIVE III ADD-ON DISK #1: ROAD & CAR: The showroom is filling up with new exotics and the road outside is winding toward new locales. The addition of two new cars, the Acura NSX and the Dodge Stealth R/T Turbo, expands on the "feel" of driving the ultimate in hot new cars. Now, there is more to being king of the road than cruising the California coast. This disk offers five New England segments, with lots of eastern architecture and scenery. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Cinemaware
Westlake Village, CA

AIR STRIKE USA: In this British arcade game with a *modicum* of realism, players fly an Advanced Tactical Fighter II (ATF II) and experience the entire globe as their "combat arena." Each side has the same number of land units, factories, etc. to attack and to defend, with the balance of power hinging on the player's successes in offensive and defensive arcade missions. Highly diverting. IBM, Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA

NIGHTBREED: The British always have had a certain flair for horror, and *Nightbreed* is no exception. A gruesome story of an undead Shangri-La, the hero must find this retreat, without bringing the police there or being devoured or otherwise subdued in the process. Several clever (yet nasty) arcade sequences punctuate this interactive movie/ac-

Circle Reader Service #32 »

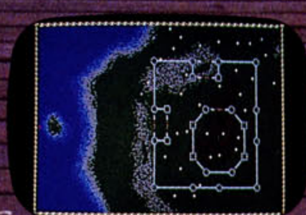
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CASTLES™

tion adventure game. IBM ($24.95); Amiga, ST ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

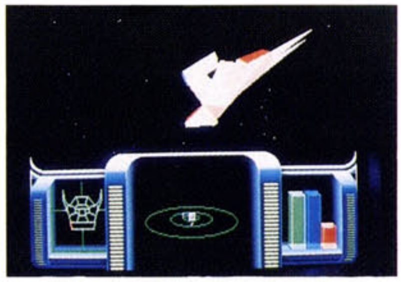
THE UNTOUCHABLES: This arcade-style game features more attractive action sequences. This time, they are loosely based on the hit movie. Scroll around six different locations, switching between movie characters, in an attempt to avenge Malone's death by throwing Nitti (ahistorically) from the courthouse rooftop. Another fine American legend as retold by British programmers. C-64, Amiga, ST ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

MicroAce
P.O. Box 5223
Englewood, CO 80155

MICROACE BLACKJACK: This game is to blackjack what a Ford pickup is to farmwork; it's not glitzy but really gets the job done. Although limited by only allowing one player versus the house, the game-aid templates and fantastic documentation makes for a package that is a sure winner. Based on the strategies of renowned blackjack expert Julian H. Braun, M.S., the clear graphics display and instructional methods will benefit the owner of this software where it matters most (at the *real* blackjack tables). Great statistical analysis and winning strategies. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Microprose
Hunt Valley, MD

LIGHTSPEED: Designed to be a hybrid between a combat flight simulation and science fiction role-playing game, *Lightspeed* blends several diverse game elements together. Players must succeed in combat, diplomacy and trade in order to accomplish the overall task of the game, finding a planet fit for colonization. Different weapons must be selected in order to defeat a variety of aliens, since



Lightspeed



Space Ace



Overlord

Please fill out the Reader Input Device card opposite page 8.

some weapons are not effective against some aliens. Diplomacy and trade are handled via menu-driven conversations, but purist role-players will note that the interaction is limited. Diplomacy is very important in the game, however, since one's success is dependent on a wise selection of allies. IBM ($54.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

ReadySoft, Inc.
30 Wertheim Court #2
Richmond Hill, Ontario, CANADA

SPACE ACE: Like its predecessor, *Dragon's Lair*, this game originally appeared in arcades and gobbled up quarters while featuring laser-disk technology. The original is faithfully represented as Earth's greatest hero, Ace, must combat the nasty Commander Borf and his Infanto Ray. Naturally, Borf has also made off with space-babe Kimberly in order to set up the requisite rescue sequence. As in the original, quick reflexes are required to meet the challenges of this beautifully illustrated arcade game. IBM. Circle Reader Service #8.

Three Sixty Pacific
Campbell, CA

HARPOON BATTLESET #3, THE MED CONFLICT: A departure from the other "Harpoon Battlesets" (don't start singing "Anchors Aweigh," please), this time it's down and dirty in the restricted waters of the Mediterranean. Most of the scenarios concentrate on the navies of smaller countries, as opposed to the superpower fleets presented in earlier products. Another interesting fact is that this product features a lot of emphasis on "what ifs." Sixty new *platforms* are added to the hardware inventory for good measure. The timing on this one couldn't be much better for *Harpoon* players. IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Virgin Mastertronic
Irvine, CA

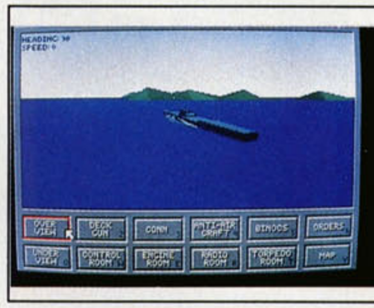
OVERLORD: Like space, this one is big (*really* big). The player confronts the computer for galactic control at the strategic level, colonizing planets, mining, farming and raising troops for defense and assault. Beautiful British graphics punctuate what is a fairly easy to learn (yet a challenge to master) strategy game. With no spaceship battles or arcade sequences, this real-time game is like an ideal human companion: pretty and deep. Amiga ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #10. **cgw**

Long Ride Into Night

Searching the Depths of Das Boot

by Paul Nielsen

TITLE:	Das Boot
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Paul Butler and Rick Banks
PUBLISHER:	Three-Sixty Pacific, Inc. Campbell, CA



Paul Nielsen is a former Data Systems Technician Petty Officer with the U.S. Navy Submarine Service.

While attending the Submarine Track of Data Systems "C" School at Mare Island Naval Base, we were offered the opportunity to view the film *Das Boot*. Later, the epic film of a sub crew's struggle for survival had a near-cult following at Sub School, New London, Connecticut which this author also attended. So, given an opportunity to review **Three-Sixty**'s *Das Boot*, I didn't hesitate. While awaiting delivery, I re-read the English translation of an actual German U-Boot commander's tactical handbook.

Initial Inspection, Sir

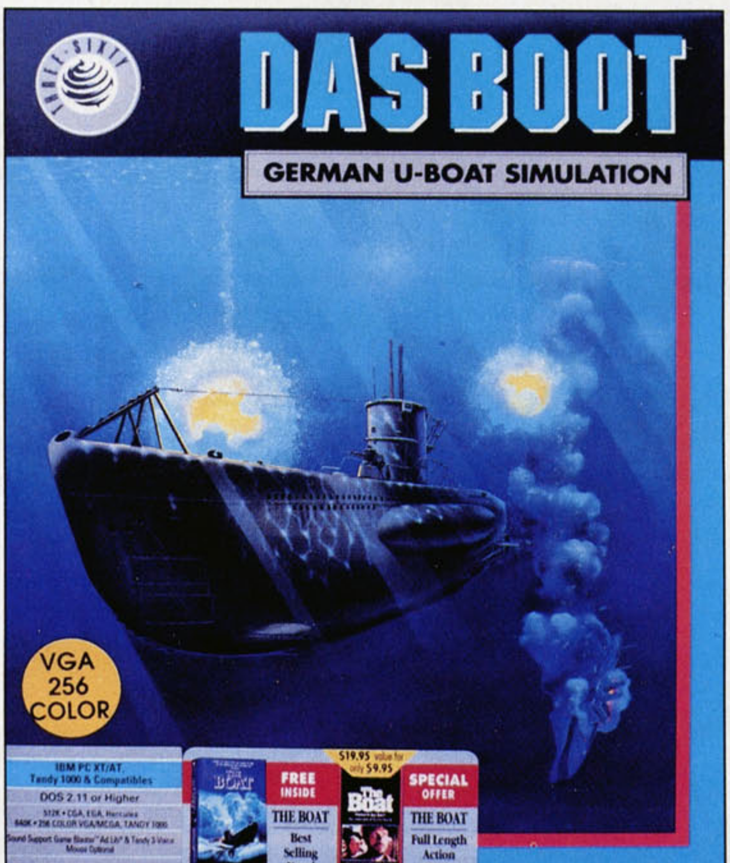
The hefty *Das Boot* box shows a WWII German sub stealthily leaving the scene of a freighter's demise. Key words jump from the features list: 256 VGA color, Enigma coding machine, 3-D views, *historical realism*! Not only that, it includes a copy of the book *The Boat* by Lother-Gunther Buchheim. Within a minute, this baby was installed. A very impressive opening score was soon resounding through the **Sound Blaster** board and stereo. Unfortunately, the opening's full animation proved to be incompatible with this reviewer's Orchid ProDesigner II VGA board. Instead, a 256-color sub appeared with the main menu, the usual options of Preferences, War Diary (read "high scores"), Demo and Action.

Maiden Voyage

Opting for the Baltic training before undertaking a full mission, a menu of four surface and four submerged training sessions appears. Manning the anti-aircraft gun, several fighters and light bombers make runs at the sub. The joystick is *not* supported and the mouse is strictly used for menu selections. So, aiming the gun is accomplished solely by the arrow keys on the keyboard. Scoring is based on the number of planes hit (they always crash) minus the number of bombs dropped on the sub. *Hint:* To score high, go for the fighters; they come in close and the large silhouette can't help but be hit. Also, the game is over when the AA shells are used up, so waste a few rounds to shorten the game and avoid extra bombs.

Then, a bad feeling about this game sets in: No sub commander in his right mind would take on a dozen planes. In the slim event that his sub would survive, he would lose his command for breaking orders. Yet, this is only the first part of the Baltic training — maybe it gets better.

Unfortunately, the other training sessions are more of the same. The torpedo runs are turkey shoots reminiscent of an early '80s arcade sub game. The sub versus sub "simulation" (this technology isn't exactly WWII vintage) is an underwater outside view of two subs — giving a new definition to the computer jargon "point and shoot." During WWII, subs only attacked other subs which were on the *surface*.



An initial try at the depth charge training saw this commander able to dodge the falling charges and completely avoid taking any damage. When the game locked up (on an genuine Intel OEM PC, mind you), it was time to take a closer look at the manual....

Manual Labors

Page one has a disclaimer stating that the software is not intended to recreate the book. The name *Das Boot* is "for promotional purposes only." Hmm.... Then there's a statement that *Das Boot* brings some innovations to sub simulators, such as outside 3-D views, improved torpedo set-up and realistic digitized graphics.

Something Rotten Sailing Past Denmark

Das Boot excels as an arcade game involving individual sailors' duty stations on a submarine at general quarters (much like **Epyx'** *Destroyer*, **Microplay**'s *Destroyer Escort* or **Accolade**'s *Gunboat*). However, it fails (sinks?) as the *serious* submarine simulation it is positioned to be because it doesn't permit the player to take on the combined role of the captain and his crew.

Submarine simulators, more so than fighter plane or tank simulators, must provide a balance of strategic and tactical information at all times, letting the sole player assume the roles of the sub captain and duty station officers simultaneously. *Das Boot* permits control of the sub at several stations, but limits the information available to the player. For example, it is possible from several stations to order a down bubble (increase angle of descent). Unfortunately, the current angle of the dive planes may only be ascertained at the Control Station.

Limited Intelligence on Board

Each station has only a limited view. The anti-aircraft gunner only sees planes directly in front and will often be surprised by a plane attacking from the side. The conn permits viewing in one direction — straight ahead. Now, *688 Attack Sub* solves this problem by making the player go to different stations but providing certain key information at *all* of them. *WolfPack*, another 256-color U-boat arcade game, puts the player in the command seat of an entire squadron of subs with the player moving from one sub to the next by selecting it on the map. *Das Boot* suffers by comparison and from several odd program features as well.

Gremlins

To wit, the sub changes heading at a constant rate, regardless of the amount of rudder desired or the speed of the sub. Compounding this, at a dead stop the sub freely pivots! When looking at the outside surface view, one never sees another surfacing sub. Likewise, an underwater view will never show a surfaced sub after it submerges. There are more "features" like these, plus the occasional divide error or lock-up.

There are more serious design flaws at the duty stations. For instance, there is no way to range the deck gun, which fires at a rapid rate and never needs reloading (since it never runs out of ammunition). There is no way to command the sub to come to a specific bearing, either. The player must stay at the helm holding down the arrow key to perform this task.

Also, while *Das Boot*'s user interface involves the mouse for duty station selection, all the sub commands are executed via the keyboard. To add to the frustration, several of the commands include shift and alt sequences when simple single keystrokes would have sufficed. The situation is made worse by the fact that several of the keys change their function from duty station to duty station, so consistency is lost and the learning curve is made needlessly long.

As an arcade shoot-'em-up, *Das Boot* might cut the mustard. Be warned, however, that those who liked the movie might want to torpedo the game. **CGW**

How the Luftwaffe Can Have Hugh Dowding's Drawers or the RAF Can Get Goering's Goat

by James M. Lowerre, Jr.

Since I was twelve years old and saw the movie "The Battle of Britain" I've fantasized about being a pilot in that battle. With the release of **Lucasfilm Games**' Their Finest Hour, *that fantasy has come to life. Repeatedly savoring the joy of flying my computer in the autumn skies of Southern England in 1940 has inevitably given me a deal of experience with the game that I'd like to share. In the explanation of these "lessons learned," I will refer to, but not repeat, the hints and tips previously published in* CGW *by Roger White (#75 and #77) and Russell Sipe (#67).*

Campaigning in *Their Finest Hour*

Before conducting any campaign, a commander must know not only the campaign objectives but also the general circumstances that will apply to all battles in the campaign. In this light, it is important to bear in mind that the computer opponents in any campaign scenario will be Top Ace quality with scores of around 2,000 points. The player's Non-Player Characters (NPCs) will only perform better than novices if their scores are equal to or greater than 1,000 points. When commanding the Luftwaffe, it is important to understand that aircraft (along with their NPC pilots) will be lost to operational hazards as well as enemy opposition. Escorting fighters may crash on take-off and bombers may be brought down by the exploding ordnance of preceding planes.

When playing either side, clone the top two or three scoring pilots in each category by using the DOS copy command and different character names. Then, save all the original characters in a single sub-subdirectory in the BOB1940 subdirectory. For those who consider this cheating, go ahead and assign NPCs to fly supporting missions and watch as hundreds of player hours go down in flames or crash into the channel very early in the campaign. Suddenly, there is nothing left but novice pilots to continue the campaign!

For those who want to protect the player time invested in each character's score, fly Original Top Pilot Characters (OTPCs), saving their files to the sub-subdirectory every two or three missions. Use these files to replace losses in the campaign by copying them out of the sub-subdirectory and back into the BOB1940 subdirectory.

The Luftwaffe

1. Target the RAF airfields. The game accurately mirrors history and this is the fastest means of attriting the RAF's fighter strength. Initially, when only the Ju-87s are available as bombers, hit the cross-channel coastal satellite airfields. That way, if any OTPCs are shot down, it will be over the channel, most likely, and they can be rescued. Once the Bf.110C-4B and the medium bombers become available, go after the deeper airfields.

2. Try the solo bomber alternative. Differing from White's "clear the skies ahead of the bombers" method of campaigning (which works very well), the player should personally fly one bomber and assign all other aircraft as fighters flying close level escort in schwarm formation (don't assign more than two NPCs to this formation because the last one frequently crashes into the channel shortly after take-off).

Choose the fastest bomber with the heaviest bomb load available. Then, take off from an airfield inland from the fighter airfield and fly under the radar at four to five hundred feet in altitude. Follow the escorts to the target (the computer-controlled pilots navigate very well). Bomb the target using the straight-low-slow method (described in "Bomber Operations" below). With the relatively heavy bomb loads carried in the medium bombers, two or three airfields can be reduced in this manner. Concentrate on the primary airfield first and try to totally destroy it since the results on that target will be reflected in the Luftwaffe's other targets for that day. Secondary targets hit will be reflected in the overall strategic situation. The RAF's airfield operability rating will drop quickly toward the victory objective of 35%.

3. Try the multiple bomber alternative. If one desires to employ more than one bomber, it is only possible to fly as a wingman in a bomber formation. In this case, one cannot get the other aircraft to adopt the straight-low-slow bombing method. So, one stands a good chance of losing these other aircraft during the mission (particularly with the vulnerable Ju-87s). Nothing, however, precludes the player from running his own bombing attack separate from his bomber group. Of course, such a lone wolf must beware of the *group* dropping its bombs from altitude while making one's own straight-low-slow attack! What's worse than being bombed by one's own planes? Remember, even three effective NPC pilots are nowhere near as efficient as a single player-controlled bomber using the straight-low-slow technique.

The RAF

1. Use all available aircraft. Every mission, organize them into two or three groups using the schwarm formation. Start all groups on the corner of the target closest to the enemy airfields. Separate each group by altitude (i.e., one at 12, one at 9 and one at 6,000 feet). From each group's initial point, use a single additional way point in different directions of likely attack at the same altitude as the initial point, but close to the initial point (so that the symbols partially overlap). This way, other groups can be more responsive to the actual threat if a wrong guess is made on the direction of attack. All groups should have a CAP priority with one's personal group taking the senior position at the highest altitude.

2. Expect to be attacked. At least two groups of enemy bombers escorted by fighters, one group around medium altitude (10,000 feet) and one group around low altitude (3,000 feet), will do so. Both groups will come from approximately the same direction (rarely the one anticipated). When flying Hurricanes, the bombers will most likely be Do-17s. When flying Spitfires, the player is likely to be facing Ju-88s.

3. Attack the enemy at the highest altitude. Interception angles need to be calculated so that one engages the enemy as far away from the target as possible. Once finished with the high-altitude group, go after the lower one(s), but beware of left-over escorts from the earlier group.

4. Protect the RDF system as long as possible. The Luftwaffe will continue to attack it until they are convinced they have put it out of action. Hence, they do not turn to the much more critical airfields until this is accomplished.

5. Maintain RAF fighter strength. Never needlessly risk pilots or aircraft. Protect the airfields by getting the bombers *before* they get to the airfields.

Some Tactical Tips for Campaign Bomber Operations

1. There are three basics: bomb on a straight line, bomb at low altitude and bomb at slow speed.

2. Be sure to select the single bomb release option.

3. When approaching the target area, before the individual buildings of the target become visible, reduce altitude to 50 feet. Do this at engine power sufficient to quickly correct mistakes without stalling. "Trim" the aircraft for perfectly level flight since at reduced speed even the slightest climb will result in a most undesirable stall and crash combination.

When the individual buildings of the target become visible, get on an approach that puts two of the buildings lined up one behind the other. Slowing air speed at this point offers more time to get this delicate approach correct.

If a slower air speed is desired, using flaps, landing gear (not as crazy as it

sounds considering your altitude), throttle and especially dive brakes is more efficient than simply using the throttle.

Release each bomb as the base of the target building reaches the center-bottom of the cockpit window (use the camera replay until this is mastered). As soon as the bombing run is complete, retract flaps, landing gear and dive brakes and go to full throttle. Come back around at fifty feet to repeat the process as necessary.

Once the bombing is completed, retract all surfaces and climb back to five hundred feet (thus, if shot down, there will be enough altitude to bail out), head for home, turn on the autopilot and man the guns to defend your aircraft on the long journey to safety.

Some Tactical Tips for Campaign Fighters Operations

1. Again, there are thee basics that should be adhered to whenever possible: dive from superior altitude, get on the enemy's tail fast and get close when firing.

2. When approaching enemy fighters while possessing an altitude advantage, use the scan view to watch the enemy climb. They tend to turn onto the player's heading as they gain altitude, enabling one to dive easily onto their tails.

3. If an enemy fighter attempts to turn into one's plane, a single burst fired in front of him will frequently turn him away, presenting a very vulnerable six o' clock.

4. When coming head-on against an opposing fighter, one should go into a steep dive as soon as the enemy begins to fire. When the opponent's firing is no longer audible, one can stop the dive and loop up behind him.

5. Use designer Larry Holland's technique of attacking bombers from above and in front. Then, loop onto their rear, firing continuously while rolling and pitching, side to side, up and down, and keeping the bomber in the gun sights. This puts all available fire into the bomber and keeps the player a moving target for the bomber's gunners.

6. Long-range gunnery can be very effective against both fighters and bombers.

Straight-Low-Slow Table

Aircraft	Engine Power	Flaps	Landing Gear	Dive Brakes
Ju-87B	100%	Down	N/A	Down
Bf-110C	56%	Down	Down	N/A
Do-17Z	75%	Down	Down	N/A
Ju-88A	100%	Down	Down	Down
He-111H	68%	Down	Down	N/A

Airspeed should be 150 and altitude should be 50 feet for all planes shown above.

British fighters have an edge in this category as they can successfully engage Ju-87s, Bf-109s, Bf-110s and even the Do-17s as soon as the target wing span reaches the edges of the gunsight ring.

7. When flying RAF fighters, remember to roll upside down before an unopposed steep dive. This uses the centrifugal force to feed the carburetor to avoid the embarrassing hesitation and engine cough of performing a steep dive in the upright position.

8. It is possible to regain altitude quickly by doing a series of half-loops, each time rolling upright and diving from the top of the half-loop just enough to get airspeed up for the next loop.

9. When attacking from the rear and being in jeopardy of overshooting your opponent, drop flaps and landing gear to quickly bleed off excess airspeed. Alternatively, go into a steep climb and, just before stalling, dive back onto the target.

Conclusions

Once this author had mastered the straight-low-slow bombing technique, it was clear that fighting a successful RAF Campaign was much more difficult than a Luftwaffe Campaign. Playing either side still yields a tremendous amount of enjoyment, however, which is a testament to the quality of *Their Finest Hour*'s lasting value. "Gut' bomben" or "Tally ho." **cgw**

The Rumor Bag

by Rex Kael



It was definitely *the* "A" party. Luminaries in software design added more soft refractions of light than the "Monet At Givenchy" print on the wall. The conversational palette had been pre-mixed with a gouache of California chardonnay and Coca-Cola Classic, single-malt scotch and Seven-Up. Lord British held court as he recounted the history and philosophy of *Ultima* with a circle of a half-dozen less experienced designers surrounding him like a bard around a tavern fire. "Iron Dan" Bunten anchored a group that framed the doorway and regaled them with stories of earlier days, punctuated with his folksy mountain humor. It was, after all, a secret conclave of *CGW*'s "informed sources."

Against one wall, Sid Ember lamented the impracticality of his research expedition to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley in preparation for his *Civilization* game. Participants in the group chuckled nervously, knowing Sid's penchant for doing exacting research on a project and not being sure if he was taking an opportunity for topical humor or was genuinely disappointed. I stood behind a tall designer and hoped they wouldn't notice the bag I wear over my head for all formal occasions.

Bingo.

A **Lucasfilm** designer answered Sid's complaint about not being able to research an ancient location prior to designing a game by noting that he was working on the most famous location since Plato wrote the *Timaeus*. Corey Cole had a similar problem with regard to *Quest For Glory III*. They have a story that could potentially take place in either a legendary Transylvania or darkest Africa. Both plot lines have something to commend them, but both locales are famous enough that it would be difficult to maintain the suspension of disbelief. Maybe that's why Lori is *currently* working on a game based on the *Mixed-Up Fairy Tale* concept (and designed for primary grade children) and Corey is working on a puzzle-based learning game, tentatively called *The Mad Scientist's Assistant* (and designed for junior high school and up).

Steve Meretzky broke away from the group and wandered toward the bar. I followed him as inconspicuously as possible in hopes that I might hear him describe the contemporary adobe and seafoam green furnishings of the hospitality suite in his inimitable prose. He *is*, after all, a master at room descriptions. I think he said the "vomit and vegetable" color combination might be the right effect for the color scheme in the fraternity house for *Spellcasting 201: The Sorcerer's Appliance*. Maybe I was wrong. One thing is for sure, you won't see that color scheme adorning any *CGW* covers.

Before I could hear the end of that conversation, I overheard one of *Beyond Software*'s programmers insist that their baseball game (originally designed to be *TV Sports: Baseball* for **Cinemaware**) was definitely going to be shipped by **SSI** before the summer is too far along. Since the game has not been officially named, as yet, I jokingly asked her if the game was going to be *Jim Palmer Baseball*. Her fiery glare almost burned my bag as if to say that was about as likely as Palmer being the starter for the first game of this year's World Series.

Two successful sports programmers were sitting at the table in the corner and perked up when the conversation shifted to baseball. They said the guys at **Park Place Software** are producing a sports game on a new platform for **Electronic Arts**. I could only find out that it wasn't a football game (**Park Place** has nearly cornered the market on football games by doing so much work on so many different games). I suggested it might be on the 16-bit **Nintendo** and couldn't get a response. Still, I told them that if it was another baseball game, they would have to contend with a new entry from **Virgin Mastertronic**. **Virgin** is about to complete *3-D Simulation Baseball* in cooperation with Ed Ringler of *Sport-Time Ice Hockey* and *Omni-Play Horse Racing* fame.

Unfortunately I had to leave the party rather abruptly. It seems that someone wanted to have some fun at my expense. They told Brian Moriarty and Dave Albert that I was really Scorpia in disguise. My entire career flashed before my eyes as every designer in the room began to converge upon me. To be continued? **cgw**

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Once,
Might & Magic *meant massive maps,*
detailed dungeon drawings,
and catastrophic combat.

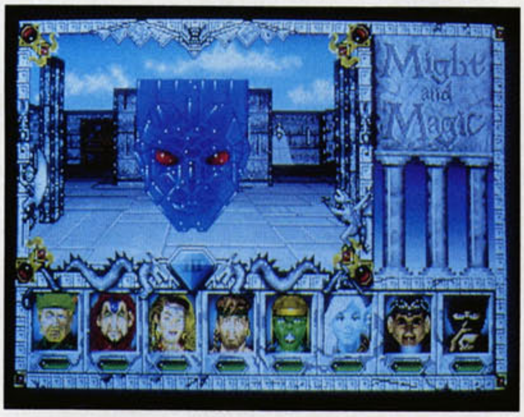
Now, New World Computing's

Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra Makes Gamers Face the Music

by Johnny L. Wilson

Actually, *Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra* (*M&M3*) puts faces on characters and monsters alike with dynamic graphics that colorfully depict the progress of the battle or condition of the player's characters. *M&M3* also features wild sound effects and audible clues amidst an atmospherically effective soundtrack.

Indeed, the game thrusts even the most novice role-playing character straight into the thick of the game's fictional atmosphere. This is because the initial stages of the game do not force the player to fool around with such mundane activities as creating a party of player characters. *M&M3* is large enough and challenging enough that there will be time to accomplish such tasks later in the adventure. Instead, the player finds his/her characters dropped into a mini-scenario where it is possible to familiarize oneself with what is important in combat, how to use the interface and where to discover on-screen help features. The opening scenario is fairly short, features very low level monsters (rabid mice, beetles that cannot play '60s hits, etc.) and is designed to be non-lethal.





Visual Cues

In *M&M3*, players do not have to decipher long (or even short) lists of numbers to determine how their on-screen personas are faring. Reminiscent of a birthstone, each character has an on-screen gem (lifestone?) that flashes one of three colors to indicate how the character is surviving. Analogous to a traffic light, green means there is no problem while yellow means the character is experiencing significant damage and red means that the situation is reaching potentially fatal dimensions. Since the label given to a type of monster will be presented on the screen in the same changing colors (with the same meanings), this visual cue will be readily perceived.

At the same time, one is likely to see his characters' faces transformed from normal through sick and on to death. This, combined with facial expressions which indicate being asleep, sad, insane, turned to stone and even obliterated, gives a texture to the game which emphasizes the character as a person rather than as a primitive military unit.



During combat, each attack is resolved with a visual cue. Different representations appear for physical, magical, electrical, poisonous, energy, cold and fire damage and the size of the representation indicates how effective the attack was. This seems much more expressive of actual combat than messages which indicate points allotted.

The visual cues for non-combat activities offer an exponential increase in verisimilitude, as well. Instead of text messages that pop up and tell the party that a hidden door or passageway has been detected, the stone lizard on one side of the action window waves his arm. Players may or may not spot the action, just as adventurers and explorers might or might not spot the tell-tale hints of a secret door. In the same way, the bat at the top of the action window shrieks and animates its mouth to magically warn the party when danger is imminent. Of course, the warning may not *always* be in time to allow the party the luxury of avoiding the combat, but it sure can help if a monster is sneaking up behind them. Finally, a gargoyle hugs the "door facing" on the left side of the action window so that players who need to make a quick escape can click on him as though he were a magical artifact. In this way, the party makes use of a handy "levitate" spell that can get many a character out of mortal danger.

To round out the visual assistance options, the screen always offers an automapping option (*de rigeur* in today's role-playing market), an icon to display mini-quests which have been revealed to the party (a *fait* not complete?) but not acted upon and a quick reference icon to display only the most succinct and salient statistical data.

Sound Bytes

Atmospheric sound is one of the important design points of *Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra*. Weapons make distinctive sounds reflective of their motion and effect, magical explosions offer percussive punctuation to battle sequences and digitized voices shout occasional battle cries and, more frequently, groan after telling blows. A full range of sound card support (**AdLib, Sound Blaster, Tandy DAC** and **Roland**) is planned and *CGW* was certainly impressed with the full range of **Roland** sound support.

Tradition

Of course, the *Might & Magic* series already has tens of thousands of dedicated fans who expect to see the same types of detailed statistics and character data that was available in the earlier games, as well as others in the genre. For those players in particular, **New World** has provided a background screen which provides masses of data, including a list of all the awards and honors the character may have won. In addition, there is a choice of ten relatively standard character classes with no surprises, five traditional fantasy races, three obvious moral alignments and, of course, the biologically requisite two sexes.

Deus Ex Machina

One user-friendly feature intentionally designed to help new computer gamers really caught this reporter's fancy. Anyone old enough to remember "Tudor Turtle" on the old "Crusader Rabbit" television cartoon series will love the warm fuzzy feeling that comes from this feature. In the cartoon series, the turtle kept wanting to experience the glory of earlier times (as a musketeer, knight, outlaw, etc.). A lizard named Mr. Wizard would send him back in time and Tudor would adventure until he got in trouble. Then, the turtle would yell, "Help me, Mr. Wizard!" and the lizard would call the prodigal adventurer home.

In *M&M3*, there is a "Help me, Mr. Wizard" button that allows players to accomplish the exact same thing. Pressing the button teleports the entire party back to the safety of the first inn where they can start all over again. It costs them one level per character, but it works nonetheless.

Crystal Ball

Early looks at *Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra* indicate that the company has stuck with the formula that has made them successful in the past. There is plenty of exploration, an abundance of combat, a plethora of treasure and dozens of mini-quests. The designers have taken care of their loyalist customers and tried to open up the computer role-playing experience to people who've never played one before. With programming might and artistic magic, *M&M3* seems certain to further expand the **New World** of computing that Jon van Caneghem and company have been building. **cgw**

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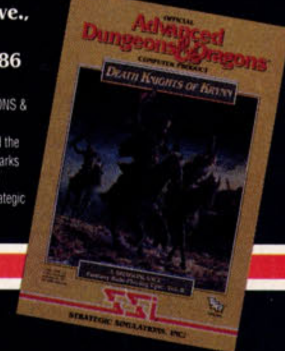
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One Saved-Game Blues

by Aaron Allston

While co-writing and playtesting *The Savage Empire*, a game driven by the same "engine" as *Ultima VI*, I ran into a problem common to both games. That is, each can only support one saved game at a time.

This is probably fine for players who live alone, bite at anyone who comes near their computers and play their games straight through from start to finish, but that isn't the way things work in *my* household or in many others. In my place, for instance, the game is installed on one computer and as many as six different people may want to play it. When one roommate or friend staggers, exhausted, away from the machine, the next slides in to take his place. Each, reasonably, wants his own saved game.

There is, fortunately, a way around the one-saved-game restriction. It's a little convoluted, but by picking up the proper utility and writing a series of simple batch files, you can set up *Ultima VI* and *The Savage Empire* to accommodate as many different players and saved games as the available room on your hard drive will permit.

Step One: Find a Directory-Renaming Utility

DOS doesn't allow you to rename directories. You can create them, fill them, empty them and delete them, but you can't rename them under DOS. Fortunately, several programmers have provided us with helpful utilities that rename directories.

The first step, then, is to find one of these programs — and to find one that can be run from the command line (so it will be suitable for inclusion in batch files).

I use RENDIR.COM, which is available in many bulletin boards' file areas. If you're on Compuserve, GO PCMAGNET and download RENDIR.COM and RENDIR.DOC. Any similar directory renamer will do. Put the utility in any directory on your PATH statement, then proceed. In all the subsequent examples in this article, I presume you are using RENDIR.COM. If you're using some other directory renamer, substitute the correct command in place of RENDIR in all these examples.

Likewise, I will assume in all future examples that you're installing *Ultima VI*. If you're installing *The Savage Empire* instead, substitute the subdirectory \SAVAGE wherever \ULTIMA6 is mentioned, and the command "savage" wherever the command "ultima6" is indicated.

Step Two: Install the Game

Now, install the game on your hard drive. You may already have the game installed, but if you've played it even once, you'll need to re-install it (trust me). You don't need to destroy your saved game, though. You can copy everything that's in your current \SAVEGAME subdirectory into another, empty, directory first. Once you've installed or re-installed the game, you'll have the main game files in the \ULTIMA6 game directory and the pristine saved-game in the \SAVEGAME subdirectory.

Step Three: Copy the Fresh Savegame Files

First, rename the \SAVEGAME subdirectory as \MASTER. Issue this command: "rendir savegame master [ENTER]". This renames the subdirectory containing the pristine saved-game files as \ULTIMA6\MASTER. Next, make a new subdirectory for every different saved game you want to have. These *have* to be in the same directory where your \MASTER subdirectory is. For instance, if you want to start out with saved games for people named Tom, Dick and Harry, issue these commands:

```
"md tom [ENTER]
md dick [ENTER]
md harry [ENTER]"
```

Finally, copy everything in the \MASTER subdirectory to *each* of the new directories, and then return to your \ULTIMA6 directory. To continue our example above, type:

```
"cd master [ENTER]
copy *.* c:\ultima6\tom [ENTER]
copy *.* c:\ultima6\dick [ENTER]
copy *.* c:\ultima6\harry [ENTER]
cd .. [ENTER]"
```

This assumes that c: is your hard drive and that your game directory is named \ULTIMA6. If either assumption is incorrect, substitute the correct information.

Step Four: Write Your Batch Files

Now, you need to write a series of small, simple batch files and place them within your \ULTIMA6 or \SAVAGE directory. If you don't have a word processor (it needs to be able to save in ASCII format) or a text editor to write the batch files, familiarize yourself with the COPY CON command in the chapter on Batch Processing in your DOS manual.

The batch files follow this format:

```
"Rendir (dirname) savegame [ENTER]
ultima6 [ENTER]
rendir savegame (dirname) [ENTER]"
```

...where "(dirname)" is the name of one of the saved-game directories.

Since each batch file corresponds to one directory, you name each after one directory: (dirname).bat. If one saved-game subdirectory is named TOM, the corresponding batch file would be named TOM.BAT.

Example: You've created three directories named \TOM, \DICK and \HARRY for your *Ultima VI* game. You'd write the three batch files in this manner:

Batch File #1, Saved as TOM.BAT

```
"rendir tom savegame [ENTER]
ultima6 [ENTER]
rendir savegame tom [ENTER]"
```

Then repeat this procedure for Batch Files #2 and 3, saved as DICK.BAT and HARRY.BAT, respectively.

Step Five: Ready to Play

You're now ready to play.

When Tom wants to play his saved game, he'll move to the \ULTIMA6 directory and just type his name: "tom[ENTER]"

The batch file changes the name of the \TOM directory to \SAVEGAME and launches the game. When Tom quits, the batch file finishes by changing the name of the \SAVEGAME directory back to \TOM. The process works the same for all the other players.

Unfortunately, this approach won't let you change from one saved game to another in the course of a single player-session; it's not that sophisticated. You'll have to exit the game and start it again by invoking a different batch file.

You can always add new saved games. For instance, if Tom wants to start a second game, you can make a new subdirectory (call it \ULTIMA6\TOM2). Copy everything from \ULTIMA6\MASTER into

it. (The files in \MASTER, since they're never called up as a saved game, always remain pristine.) Write a new batch file (called TOM2.BAT) which looks like this:

"rendir tom2 savegame
ultima6
rendir savegame tom2"

In a matter of minutes, you have a new saved game.

Batch Files and Troubleshooting

There is one problem, though not a major one, with this approach. *If* your computer crashes during the course of a game, then the next time you reboot you will find that you already have an existing \SAVEGAME subdirectory.

For instance, if Tom were playing when the game crashed and Harry happens to be the next one to play, the batch files won't work quite right. Instead, the RENDIR program will abort and Harry will find himself playing Tom's game. (Other directory renamers might have other results, but this is what will happen with most of them.)

You can get around *this* difficulty by making your batch files a little more sophisticated. Instead of the very simple batch files described earlier, you can write slightly more complex ones. Using TOM.BAT above as an example, we instead write the following:

"ECHO OFF
IF EXIST C:\ULTIMA6\SAVEGAME*.*
GOTO PROBLEM
RENDIR TOM SAVEGAME
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GOTO END
:PROBLEM
ECHO Problem! \SAVEGAME Directory Already Exists!
ECHO Return to DOS, find out which saved-game directory is
ECHO still called \SAVEGAME, and return it to its proper
ECHO name. Then you can try again.
GOTO END
:END

With this new approach, the batch file checks for the presence of any files in the \SAVEGAME directory. If files exist in a \SAVEGAME directory, it means that the \SAVEGAME subdirectory was not changed back to its proper name, and that something has gone a little wrong... and that's when the batch file notifies you of the problem.

(Unfortunately, DOS's "if exist" batch programming command — at least in the DOS 3.2 I use — can check for files *in* directories, but not for the directories themselves. If there's a \SAVEGAME directory with nothing in it, things can still be fouled up, but that eventuality is not likely to occur.)

Naturally, if your game resides in some directory other than C:\ULTIMA6, you'd have to edit the command shown above. For example, if you installed your *Ultima VI* game in C:\GAMES\ULTIMA, the second line of the batch file above would need to read:

"IF EXIST C:GAMES\ULTIMA\SAVEGAME*.* GOTO PROBLEM"

So, if you use this sort of batch file, the next time you have a system crash during play, regardless of who next launches the game, the error message will come up and you'll know to fix your directory.

If you have some batch programming

experience, you can instead write your batch files to correct such problems automatically. (You don't have to have *much* batch programming experience. *I* don't.) For instance, in a setup where Tom, Dick and Harry have saved games, each would have a batch file like the following, which is written for Tom:

```
"ECHO OFF
IF EXIST C:\ULTIMA6\SAVEGAME\*.*
GOTO PROBLEM
RENDIR TOM SAVEGAME
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GOTO END
:PROBLEM
ECHO One moment, correcting directory
problem...
GOTO TOM
:TOM
IF EXIST C:\ULTIMA6\TOM\*.* GO TO
DICK
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GO TO END
:DICK
IF EXISTS C:\ULTIMA6\DICK\*.* GOTO
HARRY
RENDIR SAVEGAME DICK
RENDIR TOM SAVEGAME
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GOTO END
:HARRY
IF EXIST C:\ULTIMA6\HARRY\*.*
GOTO WHOA
RENDIR SAVEGAME HARRY
RENDIR TOM SAVEGAME
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GOTO END
:WHOA
ECHO
************************************
ECHO — We have a slight problem here.
ECHO
************************************
ECHO All three saved games (\TOM,
\DICK and \HARRY) exist
ECHO in this directory, and so does the
\SAVEGAME
ECHO subdirectory. Something has gone
wrong, and it's
ECHO beyond the abilities of this batch
file to fix things.
ECHO You'll need to figure it out your-
self. Best of luck....
ECHO
************************************
GOTO END
:END
```

This approach would fix most problems resulting from a \SAVEGAME\ directory existing where it shouldn't. It would have to be edited for each new saved game added to your setup, however.

As with the last batch file, this file would still fail if an *empty* \SAVEGAME subdirectory were inserted in your *Ultima VI* directory. However, the opening screen would come up *without* the "Journey Onward" option, just as when you first started playing and hadn't yet created a character. So, you would never find yourself playing someone else's game — you would know right away something had gone wrong.

Last Note

There is such a thing as being too successful. Remember that the saved game files of *Ultima VI* and *The Savage Empire* start off comparatively small but get larger as the games progress. Just keep an eye on the amount of room they're taking up (that amount will gradually increase) and you should have no problems. But if you pay no attention to this, you may find the games eating all your available disk space at the same rate they eat up all your available time. CGW

A Different Set of "Jaws"

Azeroth's Just Another War in Space

by Hosea Battles, Jr.

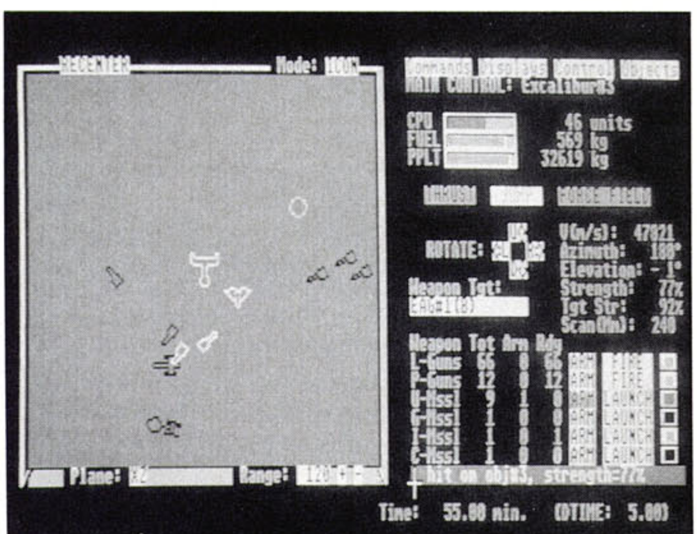


TITLE:	Just Another War In Space
SYSTEM:	Atari ST, 1 Meg required
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Robert Parkins
PUBLISHER:	Azeroth Publishing Issaquah, WA 98027

The Imperial ship Avenger *warped out of space near Lovigir, ready for battle. Scouting reports indicated only an* Orion *class Federation ship in the area, easy prey for an* Epsilon *class from a superior civilization. When the inevitable fog of war cleared and the* Avenger *crawled at a pace slower than light, her commander discovered that he faced, not one, but three* Orions! *As missiles exploded around his ship, the Imperial Commander wondered about his empress' claim that this would be "Just Another War in Space!"*

Newton Kids On The Block

Just Another War in Space (*JAWS*) is a strategic- and tactical-level space combat game for one player, in which one can owe allegiance to either the Empire or the Federation. It is not an arcade game by any means. One must think out strategic and tactical operations in order to successfully complete a scenario. Spacecraft and missiles strictly follow Newtonian laws of physics. For example, if one accelerates to 17,000 meters per second (m/s) on a heading of 90 degrees, then opposite force must be applied by accelerating to 17,000 (m/s) on a heading of 270 degrees in order to come to a complete stop. Planetary bodies also exert gravitational pull on ships and missiles, so the risk of crashing into one when passing too close is emphatically real. These spacecraft are *not* equipped for atmospheric operations.



Meaty Rules

The documentation is excellent and thoroughly covers all aspects of gameplay in 136 pages. It not only includes the requisite index and charts, but even the mathematical equations used for specific functions (such as fuel consumption and missile hit probability). Spiral-bound with a blue cover displaying the Imperial crest, the manual also includes an insert with a detailed

(Continued on page 46)

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You'll rock with the impact of a direct hit. Struggle for visibility through oil smeared, bullet-shattered canopies. Watch in horror as your engine burns. And wrestle for control against G-forces and rough wind conditions. All with the vivid realism of bit-mapped 256-color VGA graphics and room-rattling sound effects.



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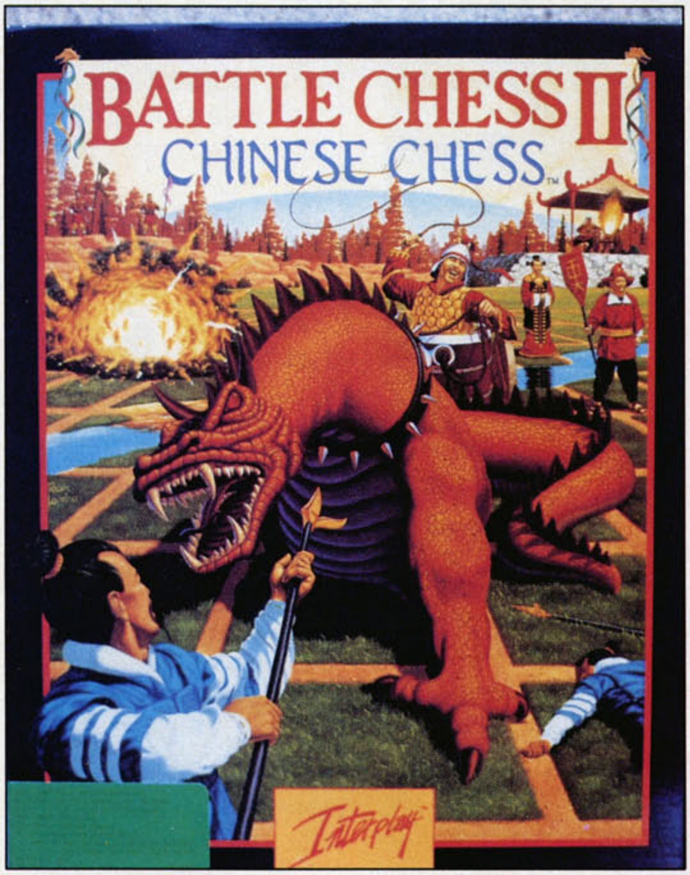
A DIVISION OF LUCASARTS ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY



Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess

With II You Get Eggroll

by Ken St. Andre





TITLE:	Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess
SYSTEM:	IBM
# OF PLAYERS:	1 or 2 (modem play)
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Greg Christensen
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Productions Santa Ana, CA

Chinese chess is to chess as Chinese checkers is to checkers — more complicated. The mind-set needed for success simply isn't the same. No matter how good one might be in our own, western chess variant — the chess of the "Mad Queen" — he is often reduced to the novice level when trying to play Chinese chess. The two games are very different.

Honorable Ancestor

Interplay had a well-deserved hit in 1988 and 1989 with *Battle Chess*, a strong chess program featuring detailed and humorous animation of the chess pieces in action. Now, there is *Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess*, featuring even *more* beautiful and humorous animations of chess armies in action.

First, the chess board itself is not the familiar grid of black and white squares. Instead it is a green field divided vertically by nine straight lines and horizontally by ten. In the center is a river dividing the two "kingdoms." The pieces are not placed *inside* the squares, but on the points where lines intersect.

Second, the pieces are different. Instead of King, Queen, Bishop, Knight, Rook and Pawn, Chinese chess uses King, Counsellor, Minister, Knight, Rook, Cannon and Pawn. Both chess variants have 16 pieces per side, but there the similarity ends. The only piece in the lot that moves exactly the same as in western chess is the Rook. There are strange differences, too, such as the Cannon. The Cannon can move like a Rook, but must use a screening piece in between to enable the Cannon to jump and land on the other unit. Ministers and Counsellors move diagonally like weak Bishops. Ministers move two spaces and cannot cross the river. Counsellors only move one, and must remain within the Palace.

Then there are the "Palace" areas of the board, areas centered upon the King and including one point to both left and right of him and two points in front (forming its own little square). Chinese Kings and Counsellors have to stay inside the Palace.

There are several other key differences in movement and placement of the pieces, but all that can be obtained from the manual. The important point is that because the pieces move more slowly, and the board is actually larger, the game is slower than chess. To master the fine points requires patience.

Players can play against the program from either side of the board, play face-to-face by taking turns or play long-distance via modem. So, there should never be a shortage of opponents.

Like *Battle Chess*, the real fun of this game comes in watching

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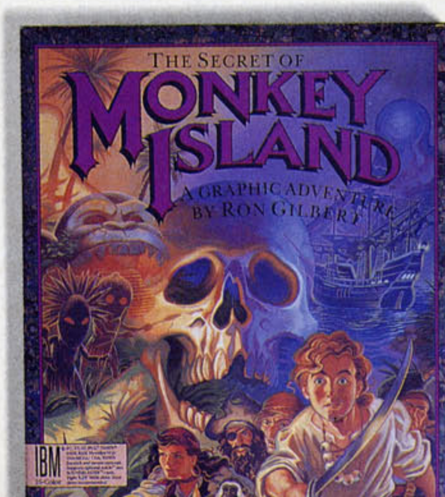
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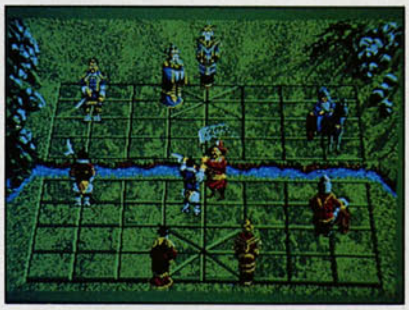


the animated combat when one piece takes another. There is swordplay, spearplay, fisticuffs and magic aplenty. Rooks usually look like warriors in chariots, but transform into fire-breathing dragons for combat. Portly Ministers deflate amusingly when pricked by the spear of a Pawn. King vs. Cannon is a real surprise package. Scott Bieser, Greg Christensen and Bryan Carson tried to follow one basic rule in designing all these animations: K.I.F.S. (Keep It Funny, Scott). The animations always made this reviewer smile and sometimes made him laugh.

Pictographic Notation?

The chess notation was a problem. I don't know if the designers adapted an original Chinese notation or made up their own, but it is a difficult notation to follow. It works okay as a copy protection scheme (input red move 3 from game 4), but as a way of describing how pieces move on the board, it is too confusing. (This reviewer tried to play out the sample games. Even the shortest one, Morphy vs. Ching Ti, did not work properly.) It would have helped if they had limited themselves to a single orientation and used a simple algebraic notation such as (piece on) e3-e4 instead of P3F1 (i.e. pawn on line 3 from the right moves forward 1).

In keeping with the general slowness of the Chinese game, the animations on a Tandy take a long time to load. One finds himself waiting around a lot while disk drives whir. It will no doubt work better with faster machines or on a hard drive.



BattleChess II: Chinese Chess supports EGA, CGA, and Tandy graphics along with Tandy sound. The player can use mouse, keyboard, or joystick to indicate moves. All legal moves are shown as ghost images of the cursor box onscreen. Some very nice musical riffs also accompany the movement of each piece.

Checkered Observations

After stating all this, this reviewer must admit that he did not like *Battle Chess II* as much as *Battle Chess I*. The animations on the first game were funnier overall than those on the second, and nothing in the second game even remotely approaches the slinky sex appeal of the queens in the original. The chess notation did not work as well for transcribing games and the nature of play is such that only a few pieces, such as the Cannons and the Rooks, get most of the action, and many amusing faceups will never occur. The slow pace of the game gives the game a "draggy" feeling. The manual, while fairly clear, isn't quite as easy to grasp as the first one was (*probably because most people already have a little background in western chess, but none in Chinese chess — Ed*). These are all little things, but they work together to decrease satisfaction with the game. Technically excellent in many ways, *Battle Chess II* simply isn't as much fun as its predecessor. Of course, someone in China might totally disagree. **cgw**

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GAME SELECTION	APPLE	C64	IBM	ST	AMIGA
BON Scenario Disk 1	25	25	25	-	-
BON Scenario Disk 2	25	25	25	-	-
Both Disks 1 & 2	45	45	45	-	-
Battles of Napoleon	32	32	32	-	-

Scenario Disks 1 & 2 for Battles of Napoleon

1. Maida, Austerlitz, Utitsa, Marengo, Redoubt
2. Albuera, Medellin, Santon, New Orleans, Bridge

GAME SELECTION	APPLE	C64	IBM	ST	AMIGA
Strategic Simulations:					
Death Knights of Krynn	-	-	34cx	-	-
Medieval Lords	-	40c	-	-	-
Countdown to Doomsday	-	28	34x	-	34
Renegade Legion Interceptor	-	-	40x	-	-
Eye of the Beholder	-	-	34ax	-	-
Champions of Krynn	34	28	34x	-	34
Curse of Azure Bonds	34	28	34x	40	34
Pool of Radiance	31	28	34x	-	34
War of the Lance	28	28	34x	-	-
Secret Silver Blades	-	28	34x	-	-
Hillsfar	-	28	34x	34	34
Dragon Strike	-	28	34x	-	34
Sword of Aragon	-	-	28x	-	34
DM Assist. Vol. 1	22	22	22	-	22
DM Assist. Vol. 2	22	16	16	-	16
Wargame Construction Set	-	-	-	-	28
Battles of Napoleon	32	32	32	-	-
Storm Across Europe	-	40	40	40b	40
Second Front	-	-	40	-	34
Gettysburg	16	16	40	-	16
Waterloo	-	-	40	40	40
Kampfgruppe	16	16	40	-	16
Overrun	-	-	-	-	40
Typhoon of Steel	-	-	40x	-	40b
Civil War	-	-	40c	-	40c
Strategic Studies Group:					
American Civil War I	28	28	28	-	-
American Civil War II	28	28	28	-	-
American Civil War III	28	28	28	-	-
Halls of Montezuma	28	28	28	28a	28
MacArthur's War	28	28	28a	-	28
Panzer Battles	28	28	28	-	-
Reach for the Stars	28`	28	28	-	28
Rommel's Battles	28	28	28	-	-
Russia, the Great War	28	28	-	-	-
Gold of the Americas	-	-	28	28	28
Fire King	-	28	28	-	-
Battlefront	28	28	-	-	-
Battles in Normandy	28	28	-	-	-
Carriers at War	28	28	28d	-	-
Europe Ablaze	28	28	-	-	-
Warlords	-	-	32	-	32
Electronic Arts:					
Andretti's Racing Challenge	-	-	34cx	-	-
Bards Tale II	16	13	21x	-	16
Bards Tale III	13	13	34x	-	34c
Escape From Hell	-	-	34x	-	-
F-16 Combat Pilot	-	25	13x	16	16
Populous	-	-	34x	34	34
Populous Data Disk	-	-	13	-	-
Powerdrome	-	-	13	16	16
Starflight	-	28	19x	34	34
Starflight II	-	-	34x	-	-
Yeager's Advanced Flight	-	13	20x	-	28b
688 Attack Sub	-	-	23x	-	34
Budokan	-	-	34x	-	28
Centurian Defender Rome	-	-	34x	-	-
LHX Attack Chopper	-	-	40x	-	-
Hard Nova	-	-	34x	-	-
Fountain of Dreams	-	-	34x	-	-
Stormovik: Su-25 Soviet Att.	-	-	34x	-	-
Madden Football	34	28	34x	-	-

GAME SELECTION	APPLE	C64	IBM	ST	AMIGA
Microprose:					
Railroad Tycoon	-	-	36x	-	-
Silent Service II	-	-	34x	-	-
Sword of the Samurai	-	-	34x	-	-
M1 Tank Platoon	-	-	40x	-	34
F-15 Strike Eagle II	-	-	34x	-	-
Red Storm Rising	-	28	34x	27	22
F-19 Stealth Fighter	-	28	40x	-	-
Airborne Ranger	-	25	27x	-	30
Pirates	31	27	27x	27	31
Gunship	-	25	32x	34	34
Carrier Command	-	23	20x	27	-
Space 1889	-	-	31x	-	-
X-Men II	-	-	25x	-	-
Knights of the Sky	-	-	36x	-	-
Lightspeed	-	-	36x	-	-
Covert Action	-	-	34x	-	-
Command HQ	-	-	36x	-	-
UMS II	-	-	39ax	-	41a
Marvel Trilogy	-	25	30	-	-
Spellcasting 101	-	-	34x	-	-
Starglider II	-	23	18x	27	-
Destroyer Escort	-	20	-	-	-
Midwinter	-	-	30x	-	28
Three Sixty:					
Harpoon	-	-	39x	-	39
Harpoon Battle Set 2	-	-	22	-	22
Harpoon Battle Set 3	-	-	22	-	22
Harpoon Scenario Editor	-	-	28	-	28a
Blue Max	-	-	34x	-	34a
Das Boot Submarine	-	-	34x	-	34a
Mega Fortress	-	-	40cx	-	40c
Armor Alley	-	-	28c	-	-
Sands of Fire	-	-	31	-	-
Origin:					
Ultima IV	-	35	35	-	36
Ultima V	-	35	35	35	40
Ultima VI	-	35	40	-	-
Ultima Trilogy	-	35	35	-	-
Knights of Legend	34	30	30	-	-
Wing Commander	-	-	40x	-	-
Wing Commander: Secret Missions	-	-	19	-	-
Savage Empire	-	-	34	-	-
Omega	34	30	30	34	32
Space Rogue	34	30	30	34	32
Sierra:					
Codename: Iceman	-	-	36	36	40
Colonel's Bequest	-	-	36	36	40
Conquest of Camelot	-	-	36	36	40
Quest for Glory II	-	-	-	40	40
Socerian	-	-	36	40	-
A-10 Tank Killer	-	-	33	-	30
Kings Quest IV	34	-	36	36	36
Kings Quest V	-	-	36	-	39
Space Quest III	-	-	36	36	36
Space Quest IV	-	-	39	-	39
General Quarters:					
Battle of Austerlitz	-	-	30	-	-
Banzai	28	-	28	-	-
Battle Stations	28	-	28	-	-
Action in North Atlantic	28	-	28	-	-
German Raider Atlantis	28	-	28	-	-
Action Off River Plate	28	-	28	-	-
War at Sea	28	-	28	-	-
Prelude to Jutland	28	-	28	-	-
War in the Falklands	28	-	28	-	-
Warship That Changed History	28	-	28	-	-
Battleship Bismark	28	-	28	-	-
The Rising Sun	28	-	28	-	-
Midway	28	-	28	-	-
Marianas Turkey Shoot	28	-	28	-	-
Air Raid Pearl Harbor	28	-	28	-	-
Mare Nostrum	28	-	28	-	-
Return to the Falklands	28	-	28	-	-

GAME SELECTION	APPLE	C64	IBM	ST	AMIGA
New World Computing:					
King's Bounty	28	28	34x	-	28
Might and Magic II	34	28	34x	-	28
Nuclear War	-	-	34x	-	-
Tunnels and Trolls	-	-	34x	-	-
Lucasfilm:					
Battlehawks 1942	-	-	22x	-	-
Loom	-	-	39x	39	39
Their Finest Hour	-	-	39x	39	39
Ind. Jones Last Crusade:					
Action Game	-	19	19	-	-
Graphic Adventure	-	-	22x	-	22
Night Shift	-	22a	28x	28a -	28a
Secret Monkey Island	-	-	39x	-	-
Secret Weapons Luftwaffe	-	-	40bx	-	-
Interstel:					
D.R.A.G.O.N. Force	-	28c	34	-	34
Empire	28	28	34x	-	34
Star Fleet II	-	-	39	-	-
Earthrise	-	-	34	-	-
Koei:					
Nobunaga's Ambition	-	-	38x	-	38
Nobunaga's Ambition II	-	-	38x	-	38
Romance of 3 Kingdoms	-	-	42x	-	42
Romance of 3 Kingdoms II	-	-	42cx	-	-
Genghis Khan	-	-	38x	-	38
Bandit Kings	-	-	38x	-	38

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GAME SELECTION	APPLE	C64	IBM	ST	AMIGA
SSI:					
Eternal Dagger	12	12	-	-	-
President Elect	12	12	12	-	-
Shiloh: Grant's Trial	12	12	-	-	-
Sons of Liberty	16	16	-	-	-
Questron II	16	16	16x	16	16
Phantasie III	16	16	16	16	16
Stellar Crusade	-	-	16x	16	16
Panzer Strike	16	16	-	-	-
DM Assist Vol. 2	-	16	16	-	16
Dragons of Flame	-	16	16x	16	16
Heroes of the Lance	-	16	16x	16	16
Red Lightning	-	-	16	16	16
First Over Germany	-	16	16	-	-
Gettysburg	16	16	-	-	16
Kampfgruppe	16	16	-	-	16
Microprose:					
Silent Service I	20	20	20x	20	20
F-15 Strike Eagle I	20	20	20x	20	-
Electronic Arts:					
Bard's Tale I	13	13	13	16	16
Bard's Tale II	16	13	-	-	16
Bard's Tale III	13	13	-	-	-
Might and Magic I	20	20	20x	-	-
Legacy of Ancients	10	10	10	-	-
Marble Madness	13	13	13	16	16
PHM Pegasus	10	10	-	-	-
Strike Fleet	13	13	13	-	-
Wasteland	13	13	13	-	-
Music Construction Set	13	13	13	16	-
Demon Stalkers	-	10	-	-	-
Patton vs. Rommel	-	13	13	-	-
Skyfox	-	10	-	-	-
Skyfox II	-	10	-	-	-
Zany Golf	-	-	13	16	16
Skate or Die	-	13	13	-	-
Ski or Die	-	13	13	-	-
Maniac Mansion	16	16	16x	-	16
Pipe Dream	20	-	20x	-	-
Sentinel Worlds I	-	13	13x	-	-
Abrams Battle Tank	-	-	13x	-	-
Starflight	-	-	20x	-	-
Zak McKracken	-	16	16x	-	-

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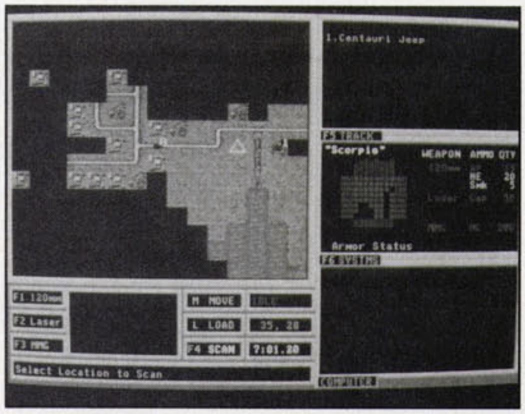
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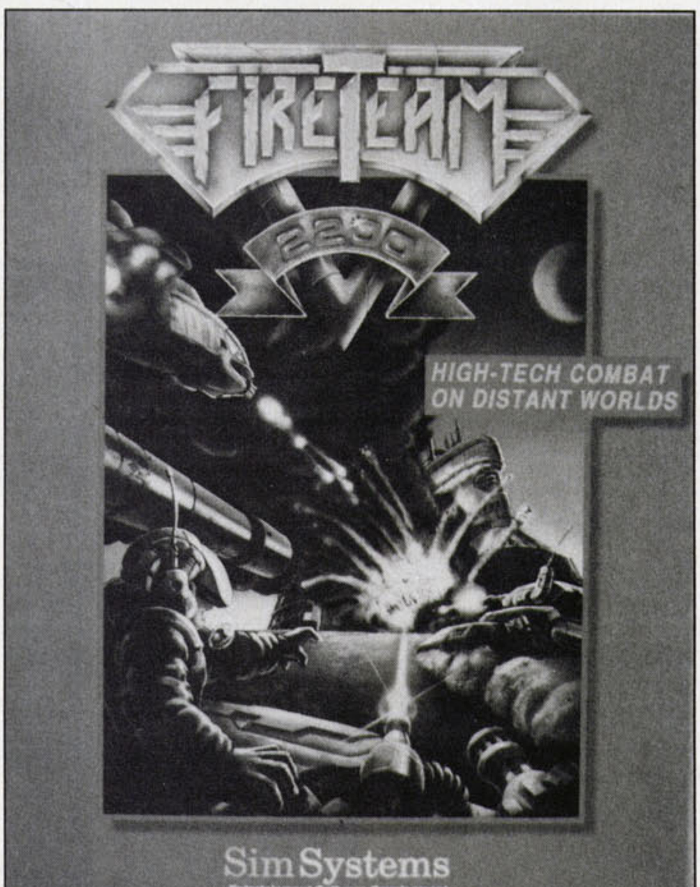


A Different Breed of Starship Troopers

FireTeam 2200

by Jesse W. Cheng

TITLE:	FireTeam 2200
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Dave Nielsen
PUBLISHER:	SimSystems 1311 Castro Street San Francisco, CA 94114-3620 (415) 824-3112



FireTeam 2200 is a game of ground combat...23rd century style. *FireTeam 2200* can be played as a solo game versus the computer, as a two-player game via null modem cable or head-to-head via modem play. The scenarios chart the campaigns of a mercenary FireTeam under the employment of the Lumina Faction through three different planets: Hubble's World, Valvana and Akilios. Each campaign is composed of three to six missions where one's "FireTeam" battles those of rival corporations for control of planetary resources. The game takes place at the tactical level where forces consist of platoon- to squad-sized infantry units and individual, pre-made vehicles. The scale of the game is equally tactical at 15 seconds per turn and 100 meters per square. Although a square grid delineates movement, there is a penalty for diagonal moves so that the distortions inherent in so many other square movement systems are not present. Role-playing wargamers (if that's not an oxymoron) will want to take a careful look at this game, as it plays similarly to the board games *Car Wars* and the old SPI game *Tank!*.

Gather the Forces

The heart of *FireTeam 2200* is the concept of the FireTeam. One assembles up to eight "units" to make a FireTeam, of which one unit (the command vehicle) represents the player. Depending on the mission, up to eight additional units may be attached to the FireTeam. One has 300 kilocredits to purchase a wide array of land, air and infantry units as well as recruit mercenary officers to command them.

To assist in deciding which units to purchase, there is a nice unit summary review where one can pull up the specs on each type of unit à la *Jane's Fighting Vehicles*. Information includes a silhouette of the vehicle; data on primary, secondary, and tertiary armament; armor protection for front, rear, and sides of the vehicle; and a summary of vehicle performance. There is a large variety of units to choose from, including heavy, medium, light, laser and missile tanks; attack or recon choppers; hovercraft; armored personnel carriers; trucks; jeeps and self-propelled artillery, to name a few. Infantry squads/sections/platoons with varying levels of experience ranging from militia to elite status are also available.

Looking for a Few Good Leaders

In the 23rd century, battle technology has evolved to the point that all vehicular combat functions are controlled by a single pilot (like *MechWarrior* in the *BattleTech* universe). So, as one purchases vehicles, one must also carefully hire pilots to command them. Higher-ranking pilots will have better driving and gunnery skills but will charge more for their services per mission. Conversely, lower-ranking pilots won't be as adept in combat but will charge very little to join your FireTeam.

FireTeam members who distinguish themselves may receive commendations and advances in rank for successful completion of missions. Advances in rank are based on: 1) glory points for destroying units; 2) honor for performing a mission successfully; 3) wealth points for performing the mission successfully and recovering various artifacts/resources; and 4) an efficiency rating based on winning percentage. As rank advances so does combat skill. It is also possible to change the composition of the FireTeam by adding units (up to eight) or by scrapping units for money (after depreciation, of course) to buy new units.

The Planning Stages

The missions are quite varied and include all types of combat situations, including meeting engagements between two opposing FireTeams; garrison duty to protect valuable company assets; convoy escort of company vehicles through hostile territory; patrol/recon missions to disrupt enemy positions; rear guard actions; kidnapping missions and city combat. Different missions will pay the mercenaries based on the degree of difficulty and destroyed enemy units.

Each mission starts with a pre-mission briefing that includes a satellite uplink which displays the strategic situation map of eight by twelve kilometers. For additional information on the mission, one can pull up the Mission Objectives Report which outlines via blinking dots the objectives to fulfill and the Intelligence Report that provides information on enemy intentions and suspected positions. After a mission is completed, the element of surprise is lost when replayed, so there is plenty of incentive to "do it right the first time." It is disappointing that *FireTeam 2200* doesn't have a scenario builder, as many tools seem to be provided for just such a feature.

Boot Camp, Keyboard Style

FireTeam 2200 is a complicated game. It is not the type of game one can just fire up and start playing without reading through the first part of the manual. There is no mouse interface and all movement and fire commands are input via the keyboard, which can be cumbersome at times. Fortunately, the documentation is excellent, with a nice manual/tip sheet, and the first few missions are tutorials to help familiarize players with basic commands/keystrokes to move units, fire weapons, scan enemy units, etc. Moreover, most commands can be accessed within three keystrokes.

What You See Is What You Shoot

As the FireTeam embarks on a mission, the vehicle system display (where all of the command control and tactical monitoring occurs) is activated. The main battle display takes up most of the left two-thirds of the screen and shows all the local terrain within a 1.5-kilometer-square grid surrounding the currently controlled vehicle. Vehicles are represented by icons and the direction of the turret indicates facing. Areas not within the line of sight of the controlled unit are blacked out, giving a nice fog-of-war feel reminiscent of the game *Empire*.

The hi-res EGA graphics are fair with a wide assortment of terrain including woods, urban, water, road and hills that affect

movement and cover. However, the vehicle icons are disappointing and appear as small blips on the screen. The right one-third of the screen (from top to bottom) has: 1) Target Tracking display which gives a list of all the vehicles that are within line of sight of the command vehicle; 2) System Status display where one can toggle between a top-down view of the remaining armor and ammo of a vehicle, critical systems status report and a Fire-Team status roll call of remaining members still available to fight; and 3) running summary of battlefield events like destroyed units and target hit chance.

FireTeam 2200 uses simultaneous movement/fire and can be set to automatic updates every 3, 6, 9 or 12 seconds for a real-time game or updates only when the player selects the F9 key for a more leisurely strategy game. Unit tasks that can be assigned include assault, probe, defend, convoy and cover, to name a few. Players can also data-link to another vehicle in order to see what the other vehicle is seeing and reassign targeting priority. Unfortunately, there is no provision for a composite view of what all units see and one cannot data-link directly from vehicle to vehicle but must always go back to the command vehicle, which wastes two turns where no orders can be given.

Armor and Hammer

The armor system is handled nicely with specialized sheaths of composite armor that must be blown away piece by piece to penetrate the critical systems in the interior (the power plant, computer, propulsion systems, pilot, etc.) of the vehicle. In this respect, the game plays a lot like *Car Wars* with armor damage from weapons fire accruing as "hit points" on the sides of the vehicle. The ordnance is also impressive with powerful particle beam weapons; self-propelled artillery (SPA) with either high explosive (HE), armor piercing (AP) or smoke shells; machine guns; missiles and mortars, to name a few. However, the game goes one step further in sophistication, with different types of ordnance having a characteristic damage pattern based on penetration, hit points and anti-personnel effectiveness. So an HE shell fired from a 105mm autocannon may have a higher hit point damage rating than a pulse laser, but only peels the vehicular armor away layer by layer while the laser beam penetrates the armor more deeply in a straight line. The **AdLib** sound effects of the ordnance firing are superb, from the whoosh of a wire-guided missile to the staccato rounds of machine gun fire. One may wonder how any person could survive such an environment for long. In actuality, very few of the officers perish, but are able to eject out of their vehicles to fight another day. Thus, a battle frequently resembles a rerun of the *A-Team* where a lot of damage is done but no one is actually killed. A nice touch for the pacifists in the audience.

Parting Shots, Future Missions

In summary, *FireTeam 2200* was able to combine wargaming "realism," role-playing, solid EGA graphics and excellent **AdLib** sounds into a nice package. Despite the game's weaknesses (no scenario builder, lack of mouse support and a bit of complexity), this game would be a worthy addition to any wargame grognard's collection. Plus, **Simsystems** plans a release of a scenario builder later this year. Stay tuned.... **cgw**



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IBM WARGAMES

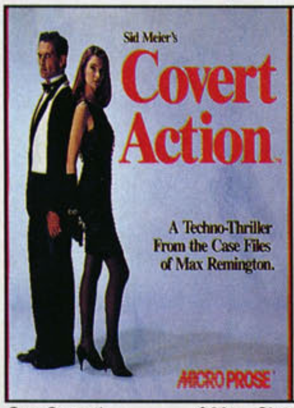
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'TEST DRIVE III' from **ACCOLADE** is out and ready to blow the doors off any driving simulation on the market. The best roads: long tunnels, highways & side roads, mountain curves & ocean straight aways. Unmatched realism: snow, rain, night driving, headlights & wipers, instant replay and 360 chase car views. Exploration: backtracking, cross country, mulitple routes & secret tracks. **$32**

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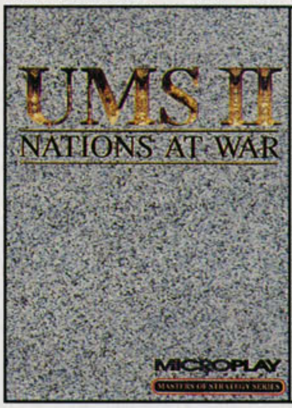
'COVERT ACTION' from **MICROPROSE** is a game of international espionage. Infiltrate enemy buildings, place wiretaps, decode secret messages, plant bugs, stake out suspects, recruit double agents, recover stolen goods and rescue hostages. Put it all together to stop terrorism and end the drug problem. An unlimited number of cases lead you to the ultimate capture of 21 masterminds. **$34**

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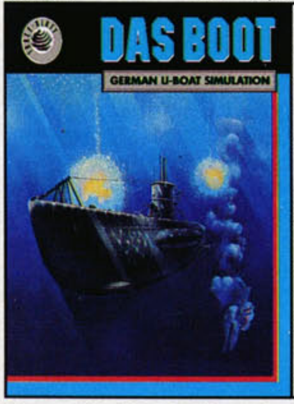
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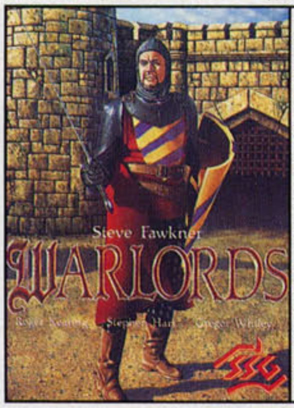
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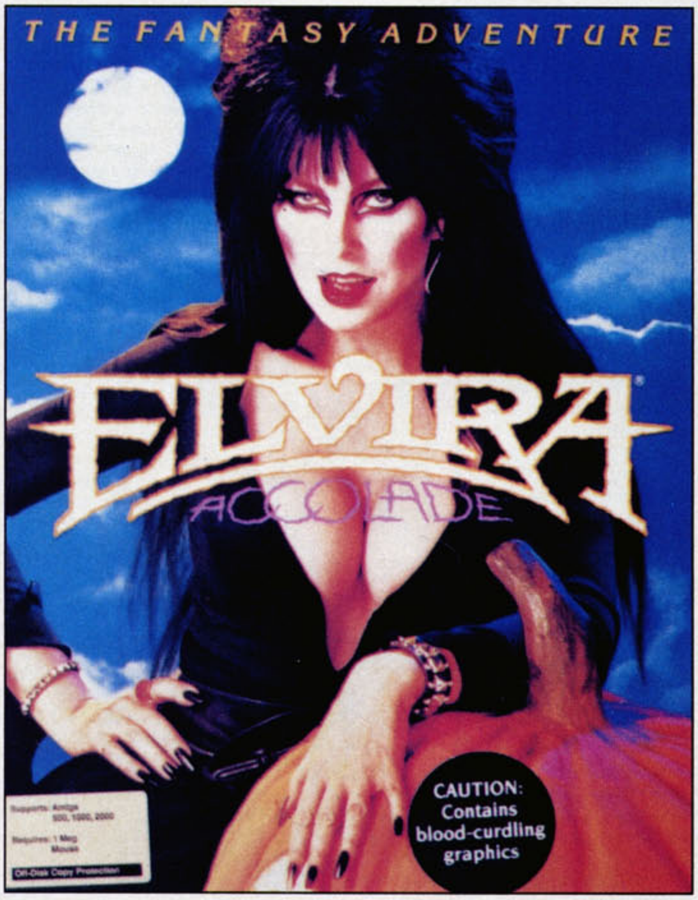
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Elvira — Mistress of the Dark

by Leah Wesolowski



TITLE:	Elvira: Mistress of the Dark
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DESIGNERS:	Mike Woodroffe, Alan Bridgman, Keith Wadhams, Simon Woodroffe
PUBLISHER:	Accolade San Jose, CA 95128



Hired by the "Hostess With The Mostest" to prevent her great-great grandmother's return from the grave, the player's task in *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* is to locate six keys hidden on the grounds of Castle Killbragant. Keys in hand, one goes after what is *really* being advertised here, Elvira's chest (ahem) which contains the "scroll of spiritual mastery" which is used on Emelda to ensure her destruction.

With that goal in mind, enter Killbragant. Oops, first meet the gate keeper (who promptly throws the player in the dungeon). Never fear, however, Elvira's here! The "Leg Night Hostess" comes to the rescue by way of a delightful animated sequence and, after chastising the player for incompetence and making remarks about tying your weenie(!) into a granny knot, she indicates that she will be in the kitchen waiting. For what? Why, for the player to locate her cookbook so that she can whip up a few useful spells for the quest.

At that point, just outside the castle and armed with a "little knife," an empty knapsack and two potions (which, when consumed, turn into spell scrolls; one for lightning bolts and one for fireballs), the game really begins. (Hint: if not consumed immediately, those potions will *not* turn into spells and will not become usable!).

Isn't It Magic?

In *Elvira*, magic can be used to create light, heal the old "aching body," and fight the hordes of monsters which will be encountered (there are even one or two that must be defeated solely with magic). Unlike the average fantasy adventure, the character does not cast his own spells. Instead, gathering certain ingredients, bringing them to Elvira and having her "mix" the spells so they can be used is the player's task. These spells take the form of potions, cakes, balls and scrolls. In a way, this is a nice twist on magic using, but if one can't figure out how to get the "Lard Ass" (yes, that's correct) out of the kitchen the game might never be finished (Hint: she hates salt). There are very limited resources as far as ingredients go, so players will have to use foresight to ensure that they will have enough to create much needed spells later on in the game. This reviewer spent a lot of time in Elvira's kitchen (not unlike at her own home, but thank goodness she didn't have Elvira's dishes to do).

Elvira is copy-protected by its spell book. Normally, this might not even garner a mention, but this really works as a "theme" of the game, and teaches players the exact ingredients and their amounts needed to create a spell during the game. If you give Elvira the wrong ingredients, or you don't have the correct amounts, she will get hostile and shut down the game, saying "You must not have the spell book. I'm not going to play with you anymore." This can become very frustrating, especially when the correct items are easy to distinguish, but not always the correct *amounts*.

"Hack" and "Slash"

The combat in *Elvira* is very similar to the combat in *Dungeon Master* in that there are gadgets which are used to designate one of two choices, block/parry for defense or lunge/hack for offense. One can also click on the screen to accomplish the same maneuvers (which is somewhat easier during the defensive portions of combat). For offense, one is seemingly able to strike

more often when alternating choices of "lunge" and "hack." While hacking away at foes, their sustained damage appears in a window just *below* the combat gadgets and, as they hack back, the player's sustained damage is displayed in a window *above* the combat gadgets. This is an excellent little feature and worth mentioning since players don't have to keep checking their stats on the status line, away from combat.

Elvira's "Looks"

The graphics and animations in this game are excellent, provided one enjoys blood and guts galore. When first playing Elvira, this reviewer was shocked at how detailed these gory graphics were. As play progressed the thought of seeing one's character's head surface in a bubbling cauldron for the umpteenth time could cause some queasiness.

In some circumstances, actively participating with some very disturbing images cannot be avoided. For instance, to have Elvira cook up certain spells, one must have a maggot or two in the inventory (yecch!). Of course, to *get* the maggots, one must click on the gardener's corpse and pick up the maggots that are writhing within his decaying husk (this is pretty gross stuff!).

There are other unavoidable animated gorefests which one is forced to watch. These include having the player's eyes scratched out by a falcon, pounding a wooden stake into a vampire and the all-too-common decapitations. These cannot be avoided as they involve either a victory or, worse, the player's demise (in which case, while waiting for the game to reload from the last save, the gruesome image remains on screen). For this reason, it was impossible to play *Elvira* while the children were awake, as these images are simply not acceptable for two-year-olds!

While there are lots of sick sequences in *Elvira*, there are also some very funny animations, too. One favorite is watching *Elvira* squeeze down a small dumbwaiter and then crawl back out. (This reviewer wanted to tell her that she shouldn't be doing that sort of thing in such a skimpy dress...).

Another outstanding feature about *Elvira* is the music. The music serves well to tighten nerves and cause skin to crawl, in the best horror traditions. There is even a different, somehow appropriate tune for each area of the castle.

Rounding Out *Elvira*

Overall, *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* is a noteworthy game. While this reviewer would like to have seen more useful spell ingredients (especially dogwood bark) or more spells which increase lifepoints, the puzzles are, at least, logical in that no grasping at straws is required to solve them. Also, while the combat requires some skill (one must get the timing just right to do well in this area), it is a surmountable problem and a learnable skill. However, the weak points of the scavenger-hunt spells, the limited availability of ingredients and the subject matter of the graphics (good art, bad taste) could make this one for the vaults of *some* adventure game players. Still, with strong points like detailed graphics (five disks full of them), genuine "mood" music and, of course, Elvira's beautiful body, this game is, like its namesake, something to notice for many of us. **cgw**



Scorpion's Tale

Scorpia Forges Cosmic Hints

Well, spring is here. The days are getting longer and Fred, as usual, is grumbling again. You can hardly blame him, though. After all, he's part Grue, and we all know that light is the bane of any Grue's existence. And speaking of banes...

Bane Of The Cosmic Forge was reviewed in a previous issue, so this article is devoted mainly to tips and hints to help you get through the game with a minimum of fuss and frustration.

Your first consideration, and a very important one, is the team you put together. Naturally, you want a solid group that can survive the rigors of the dungeons, and believe me, it *does* get rigorous. This is especially true in the latter stages of the game, where combat tends to become rather unbalanced and you need really powerful characters to stand up to the critters waiting for you.

For that reason, you should concentrate on having "specials" in your party: samurai, ninja, bishops, lords, etc. It is better to have these from the *start*, rather than convert characters to another class later. Examine the chart in the manual to see which races have the best chances to become specials and keep trying during roll-up until you get what you want. Patience is necessary here, but eventually your efforts will be rewarded.

My own party consisted of two samurai, a ninja, two bishops and a mage, and it was a very successful group. None of them, by the way, was human. Two were Dracon (a samurai and ninja) one Felpurr (samurai), one Gnome (bishop), one Rawulf (bishop) and one Faerie (mage).

That doesn't mean your own should be exactly the same, of course; a different mix might work better for you. However, I do recommend the samurai and ninja in particular, for these reasons: they receive multiple attacks sooner than other fighting classes, they have the ability to do an "instant kill," and they learn magic spells as they increase in level. Ninja also have thieving abilities, making them handy when it comes to disarming traps on chests.

The one drawback to having samurai is that it won't be until fairly late in the game that they can obtain really decent armor; most of the equipment is more for the fighters, lords, and valkyries (who can wear/use most anything). The ninja get no special armor at all (outside of the ninja garb they begin with), but as their armor class goes down "naturally" as they achieve higher levels, that is not too much of a problem, and ninja can wear a number of miscellaneous items that lower armor class, as well.

Veteran *Wizardry* players know that bishops learn both mage and priest spells, and that still holds true here, even though the magic system is quite different from previous *Wizardries*. Also as before, bishops will advance slower in spells, but their ability to have both sets outweighs that disadvantage.

The most important thing with any spellcaster is raising his/her magic skill and Oratory as quickly as possible. Experimentation showed me that the spells offered on level gain were not tied to the level of the mage, but rather to how high the relevant magic skill was: Thaumaturgy for mages, Theology for priests, and so on. The higher these skills, the better the spells offered when a spellcaster went up a level.

Oratory should not be overlooked; the higher this skill, the less chance there is of a spell failing, or worse, backfiring onto the party (usually with very nasty results). Some monsters have magic resistance, and spells may not work against them in any case. Quite a few have no resistance, however, and you don't want your spells fizzling in those instances. Consequently, add points to Oratory whenever possible.

One of the nicer features of the game is that characters' weapon abilities increase with use, apart from any points you put into them at level gain. This means you can use your precious points (spellcasters tend not to get many) to increase spell-related skills most of the time, and have the spellcasters increase weapon ability mainly from combat.

Of course, with actual fighting types such as samurai or lords, you would be putting most of the points into a weapon skill. Don't disperse points here; choose a particular weapon class and stick with it until maxxed out, unless you come across a really neat weapon (say, the Spear of Death) in which case, go ahead and start adding points to that weapon type. Ninja, by the way, do really well bare-handed; my boy Yoshi went through the entire game using just his hands and feet, and was quite devastating by the end of the scenario.

Save often! I cannot stress that too much. There is no way to replace a dead party member, short of resurrection potions or amulets, so one or more deaths means restoring the game — unless you want to run around short-handed, a practice I do *not* recommend. Furthermore, there is *no* truly safe place to camp out, and your rest is subject to interruptions at any time. Hostile critters can really do a number on a weakened party (or a weekend party), so always save before camping out.

There are a lot of doors and grates in the dungeons. All doors can be opened sooner or later, using keys, special objects, spells or lockpicking. Grates are a different matter, however. The pesky thing about grates is that you can never be sure what, if anything, will open one. This is especially annoying as some grates can't be opened at all, and there's no way to tell which is which. You just have to go with trial and error, using keys or inventory items on various grates to see what will work.

Save before going through a door or grate, because you can expect some-

thing hostile is waiting for you on the other side. Then make certain you walk all over the room and examine each wall carefully. Sometimes there are buttons you can push that will open up secret passageways or reveal a treasure chest, but if you don't check the walls, you won't find the buttons. A high skill in scouting or having the Detect Secret spell active can alert you to something special (usually a nearby button), but early in the game you must often rely on doing a thorough look-see on your own. In particular, make note of any writing or graffiti on the walls.

Always keep a couple of inventory slots open so you can pick up vital items. Fortunately, the game won't let you leave one behind, but if you don't have room for it, you'll be forced to re-boot since you can't get out of the treasure screen until you've taken the necessary object.

Unfortunately, many of these special items stick around in your inventory long after they've served their purpose, leading to inventory clutter. You can't drop them (even when they are no longer needed), so try to carry around with you only what you really need. Sell excess equipment, armor and the like to keep some room open in the backpacks.

There's no auto-mapping, alas, so you'll have to do your own cartography. Fortunately, most areas are simple to map out; the only places likely to give you any trouble are the pyramid and the River Styx. The pyramid is a problem because there is much up and down, along with a lot of walking around the edges, not to mention hostile Amazons (and other critters) popping up here and there. All you can do is take your time, go slowly and map with extreme care.

The Styx is another matter. It is overflowing (heh heh) with set encounters, and you'll have to do a *lot* of fighting to clear the place out. Once you've done that, however, you can move along the river with very few random encounters and do a thorough job of mapping. The river, while long, wraps around itself, so you can't really get lost (confused, maybe, but not lost).

Speaking of combat, one thing to be careful of is the lingering spell. Conditions such as madness, silence, nausea and so on do not end when the fighting stops. They can hang on for a long time, making subsequent encounters rather unpleasant for your party.

Some of them can be cured by the appropriate spell, if you have it. If not, you can always try camping out. Usually, a "full night's rest" will take care of these conditions. However, resting won't do anything for petrified members, and sleeping while poisoned is a good way to die.

Bane has several sections and is not especially linear. Expect to do some running around back and forth between different areas for much of the game. Here are some things to keep in mind.

Castle: There are a lot of grates here, and not all can be opened. The iron, chrome, copper and spade keys work only on doors. The RAMM key will open two particular grates. A couple of other grates can be opened only much later in the game, when you've been out to other places and obtained the necessary objects.

What you especially need to do in the castle is find your way under the altar of RAMM, as well as picking up several RAMM articles. This will help with the top level of the belfry, as well as getting into the Captain's Den (an absolute must). Don't overlook L'Montes, who has something you need. Beware of the Northwest tower; don't go up the stairs until your party has gone up a few levels in experience.



Mines (across the chasm): The important things here are defeating the rubber beasts, freeing the face in the crystal (note: four entries to the crystal), repairing the catapult and obtaining a certain gem. Make sure "Detect Secret" is up when you walk through dark areas (not many of these and they are simple, really). *Special note:* even if you get the drawbridge down, you will *not* be able to take the pirate's treasure (this is an optional part of the game and you can skip it).

Pyramid (home of the Amazon women): Your main object is to obtain the second gem. To do this, you will have to find a bone key and an idol. Keep in mind Indy Jones and the Lost Ark.... By the way, if you give the Queen a present on your first visit, you can talk to her second in command who has some interesting items for sale.

River Styx (beyond the Skull door): Do the Island of Minos completely before leaving it. You particularly want to find the Book of Sirens before taking the raft ride. Locate the sunken treasure, which has an important key. Make sure you collect three cylinders of ashes. Visit the Isle of the Dead *last*, as it a very tough place. The bottom level holds four special crypts that contain the *very* best armor and weapons, and the combats will be *hard*. Make sure the first person in the party is wearing the silver cross. Finally, be careful down there; beyond a certain point, there is no going back.

Forest: Talk with the Faerie Queen and the Oracle (absolute musts). Check out the abandoned ship thoroughly. The rock of reflection is also important. When you've finished the forest, it's time to bluff your way past the grate into the RAMM temple for the end game.

RAMM Temple: Very nasty place. You will have to endure a series of tough encounters as you make your way through the rooms to the final showdown. What path you choose does not seem to matter too much (at least not in my experience). Have as many protective spells up as possible when you take your little tour, and be ready with Silence and Anti-magic; most of what you face in here will have spellcasting abilities.

You may find the ending a bit of a downer, since you don't, after all, get what you came for. However, you can at least go roaming around to check out anything you skipped the first time through the game. Which, I suppose, is better than nothing.

Well, I see by the invisible clock on the wall it's that time again to depart. Remember, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

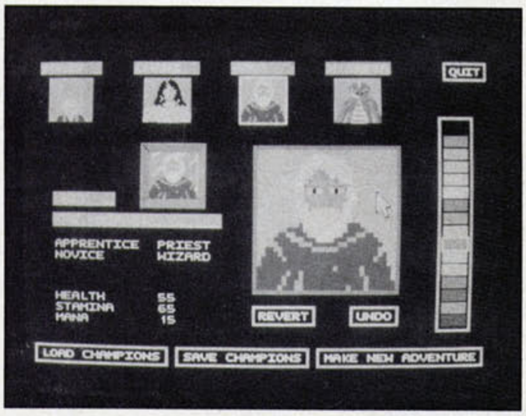
On GEnie: Stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

 CGW

TITLE:	Dungeon Master II: Chaos Strikes Back
SYSTEM:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNERS:	Doug Bell, Joe Linhoff, Mike Newton
ILLUSTRATORS:	Andy Jaros, David Simon
PUBLISHER:	FTL Software San Diego, CA





Chaos Strikes Back

Another Brick in the Wall

by Derek Godat

With a hand that was the veteran of a thousand duels, the warrior loosed his blade in its scabbard and surveyed the dim interior of the software shop. A full two score of battle-hardened computer nerds glared unblinking from their positions across a bleak expanse of carpet. Ignoring the menace of their bespectacled eyes, the stalwart warrior marched onward, a myriad of weapons, ornaments and trophies jangling with each forward stride.

Wordlessly, the sea of brigands, cutthroats and swaggering joystick-wagglers parted, allowing the warrior to confront a diminutive figure cowering in their midst. As the shadow of the warrior fell across him, the dwarfish salesman jittered in fear. The precise instant the warrior's fiery eyes fell upon him, the shopkeeper raised a battered cardboard box to ward off the impending confrontation.

"D-D-Dungeon Master T-Two?" the dwarf whined. "Last c-copy, oh great and honored m-m-master. S-Special discount t-t-t-today..."

With unnerving swiftness, a gloved fist shot out and tore the box from the shopkeeper, sending shreds of cellophane wrapper into the air. Breathless minutes passed as the warrior sounded out the words embossed upon the package, using a tiny stiletto to point out each letter.

The warrior had crossed vast oceans, battled ghouls innumerable and trekked for leagues overland to reach this spot and to open this very box. His nigh-impossible quest was tantalizingly close to completion. A rumbling voice of steel spoke the title with grave finality.

"Expansion Set Number One?"

A gale of foul air was released as the congregated nerds gasped for breath. The dwarven software salesman strained out a smile and, with a trembling demeanor, was about to recommend a hint booklet when, without warning, the warrior exploded in a blood-mad whirlwind of fury!

"By Grak the Heavy-Handed! By Yurt the Demonic Scourge!! By N'rgka and Xitl and Tst'K'Mo'Cad'Lth the Unpronounceable!!! This cannot be! I have crossed vast oceans! Battled ghouls innumerable! Trekked leagues overland! And for what? A mere expansion disk! *By Ballab the Unreasonably Upset, heads will roll for this!"*

"Heads Will Roll!"-Playing

While this reviewer's reaction was slightly less wrathful than the fictional warrior's, the trials undergone were greater, by far. Likewise, to the seasoned adventurer, *Dungeon Master II*

provides more in the same vein. *Chaos Strikes Back* is no better and no worse than the original game, so there will be few surprises in store for Dungeon Master veterans.

After nearly three years of production, *Chaos Strikes Back*, the heralded sequel to the original *Dungeon Master*, is but an Expansion Set (i.e., more of the same repackaged). Although not a totally disappointing product, *Chaos Strikes Back* fails to inject any improvement or innovation into the *Dungeon Master* system. It is indeed a continuation of the tale spun in the original *Dungeon Master*, though much is similar to the first game. One of these similarities, the title character, Chaos, is once again responsible for the gamer's dungeoneering trials and tribulations.

Chaos and the Ultimate Bad Guy

It seems that this malicious magician was farsighted enough to have predicted his own demise at the conclusion of the first adventure. He has taken steps to ensure his revivification, however, by means of four nasty pieces of Corbum Ore. Unstopped, these Corbum brickettes will drain enough magical Manna from the universe to free old Chaos and his not-very-nice cronies. If the heroes of *Dungeon Master* are unable to prevent this catastrophe, their lives, the universe... and *everything* are all forfeit. To paraphrase, it is the well-worn tale of the really, *really* bad wizard versus the really, *really* good adventurers, with the entire world hanging in the balance, as always.

This finely crafted *original* scenario aside, *Chaos Strikes Back* is naught but another set of mazes, monsters, and magical items coupled with some nifty utilities. Chief among these utilities is the portrait editor, which allows any player to repaint his or her champion's portraits. While it is certainly not *DeluxePaint III*, the portrait editor gets the job done swiftly and painlessly, and features convenient fill and undo options.

Get A Clue!

Another handy utility comes in the form of a Hint Oracle. Should the situation arise, and it undoubtedly will, when the gamer has exhausted all options and is hopelessly beating his or her overtaxed skull against the dungeon walls, help is close at hand. The Hint Oracle provides salvation in the form of helpful verses, carefully sculpted to give the gamer a shove in the right direction while salvaging the intimate secrets of the dungeon.

Rounding out the Utility Disk included in *Dungeon Master II* is a lengthy animated introduction. While this graphic preface is perfectly lovely where it sits, this gamer wonders why it does not reside on the actual game disk itself, as part of the opening credits. **Psygnosis Software** has proven in their games that an animated opening sequence can be quite effective in establishing mood. The same effect could have easily been brought about with this game. Similarly, the Hint Oracle and portrait editor would be less out of place if it were possible to access these tools from within the dungeon, thus eliminating the need to reboot if the party becomes trapped or if graphic touch-ups are in order. The removal of the *Dungeon Master* utilities to a separate disk does nothing to stifle enjoyment on the adventure, but one wonders why these common-sense changes were not made.

First Level Characters Need Not Apply

This adventurer does not recommend *Chaos Strikes Back* to inexperienced or amateur role-playing gamers. Indeed, the game itself gives little assistance to the first-time dungeon explorer. Though the packaging states that the original *Dungeon Master* is required, this is untrue. What *Chaos* lacks which the original provides is a reprinting of the first game's storyline and magical runes, along with a few easy labyrinth levels for dungeon-masters-in-training. Unfortunately, the monsters, traps, and puzzles presented within are all of the most heinous, unforgiving sort, and will surely crush the bones and spirits of all but the dungeoneering elite. *Chaos Strikes Back* is a game which allows for only two types of players, the "quick" and the "dead."

M.O.T.S. (More of the Same)

For the beginner, this reviewer wholeheartedly recommends the first *Dungeon Master*, a game which has won acclaim from legions of fans and is still taking all comers to this day. Once Chaos has been crushed and the original game has ended, *Chaos Strikes Back* will be ready to sate any further bloodlust.

Unfortunately, despite the optimism which this viewpoint affords, this gamer cannot help but to chastise **Software Heaven** and **FTL Games** for this long awaited *rehash* of the original *Dungeon Master*. The "living dungeon" approach to RPGs is fast becoming commonplace, with titles like *Bane of the Cosmic Forge*, *Captive*, *Bloodwych* and *Eye of the Beholder* improving upon the *Dungeon Master* system, or at least presenting the same concept with new trappings (forgive the pun). One wonders how long *Dungeon Master* and its chaotic sequel will survive before sinking into the mists of software history.

With the release of *Chaos Strikes Back*, FTL still has one foot resting in the winner's circle. Sadly, the other is resting on its laurels. **csw**

Computer Gaming World's

See Reader Input Device on page 74

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Wing Commander*	*Origin*	*AC*	*86*	*10.82*
2.	*Railroad Tycoon*	*Microprose*	*ST*	*78*	*10.69*
3.	*Their Finest Hour*	*Lucasfilm*	*AC,SI*	*103*	*10.41*
4.	*Red Baron*	*Dynamix*	*SI*	*51*	*10.22*
5.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*ST,SI*	*124*	*9.64*
6.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*WG*	*72*	*9.51*
7.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicProse*	*SI,WG*	*71*	*9.45*
8.	*Ultima VI*	*Origin*	*RP*	*70*	*9.43*
9.	*Bane of the Cosmic Forge*	*Sir-Tech*	*RP*	*29*	*9.41*
10.	*Silent Service II*	*MicProse*	*SI*	*45*	*9.41*

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
11.	MechWarrior	Activision	ST	52	9.29
12.	King's Quest V	Sierra	AD	51	9.25
13.	Quest for Glory	Sierra	RP	22	9.23
14.	Command HQ	Microplay	ST	53	9.21
15.	Wings	Cinemaware	AC	31	9.15
16.	Populous	EA	ST	115	9.13
	Elvira	Accolade	RP	30	9.13
18.	Hero's Quest	Sierra	AD,RP	54	9.12
19.	Red Storm Rising	MicProse	SI	74	9.09
20.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	AC,SI	86	9.05
21.	Power Monger	Electronic Arts	ST	30	9.03
	Ultima V	Origin	RP	95	9.03
23.	Wasteland	EA	RP	119	9.01
	Lords of Rising Sun	Cnmwre	AC,ST	53	9.01
25.	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix/Sierra	AD	37	9.00
	Second Front	SSI	WG	37	9.00
27.	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	34	8.97
	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	45	8.97
29.	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	25	8.96
	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	ST,RP	31	8.96
31.	Overrun	SSI	WG	24	8.93
32.	Secret of Monkey Island	Lucasfilm	AD	29	8.91
33.	Falcon	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	62	8.90
34.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	RP	30	8.87
	NFL Challenge	XOR Corporation	ST	86	8.87
	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	63	8.87
	Indianapolis 500	EA	SI	32	8.87
38.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	RP	54	8.81
39.	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	43	8.80
	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	AC	25	8.80
41.	Project Stealth Ftr	MicroProse	SI	29	8.79
42.	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	AD	47	8.77
	Bard's Tale III	EA	RP	54	8.77
44.	Airborne Ranger	MicroProse	AC	74	8.76
45.	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	28	8.75
46.	Jack Nick Unlimited	Accolade	ST	26	8.73
	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	30	8.73
48.	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	62	8.72
49.	Action Stations	Conflict Analytics	WG	22	8.71
	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	29	8.71
51.	Secret of the Silver Blades	SSI	RP	47	8.70
	Nuclear War	New World	ST	41	8.70
	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	33	8.70
54.	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	58	8.69
55.	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	43	8.67

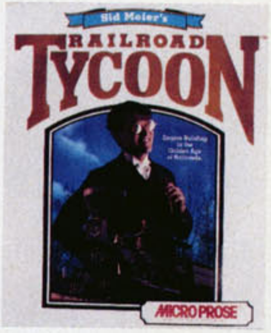
THE HALL OF FAME

The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	70	8.67
	Sword of the Samurai	MicropProse	ST,RP	40	8.67
58.	Ishido	Accolade	ST	28	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Software Toolworks	ST	44	8.65
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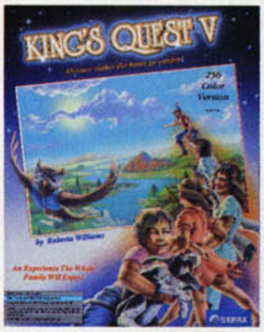
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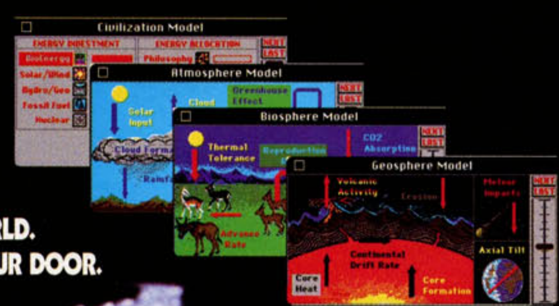
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If Every Cliche Were Reality

Psygnosis' Obitus

by Allen L. Greenberg



The cosmic rules that govern our reality insist that death be a part of life. The rules that govern computer-simulated reality are even harsher, inflicting death over and over again as necessary stumbling blocks on the way to victory and honor in "life." The strictest enforcement of this edict is handed down by **Psygnosis**, a company whose action games often place such maniacal demands on players that death frequently occurs within several seconds of the opening credits. With *Obitus*, an action-oriented Fantasy Role-Playing game (FRPG), that company has finally seen fit to offer mere (simulated) mortals a fighting chance at survival.

TITLE:	Obitus
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST IBM
DESIGNERS:	Giulio Zicchi, Nik Wild and Michael Haigh
PRICE:	$59.99
PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis Liverpool, England

Troll Roads

Obitus challenges the player to escape from a colorful medieval kingdom. There are mazes in the form of forests and underground mines. There are also castles and churches to be explored, as well as treacherous open roads filled with rogues from the shoot-now-ask-questions-later school of banditry. There is a large cast of characters in the game, some of whom have objects to offer the player and most of whom are more than willing to offer advice. Other characters are busy aiming their weapons at one's hero, even as they come into view. It is up to the player to decide which characters merit a conversation. Some are better left alone while others clearly deserve perforation via arrows.

Success in the game will depend, in part, on the player's ability to map and thoroughly explore the mazes and various buildings. The mazes are beautifully depicted in three dimensions and scroll in whichever direction the player moves. Objects, characters and passages shrouded in shadows become visible gradually as the player moves toward them. In dim lighting, arrows from hidden foes may unnervingly pour from the shadows.

The interiors of various buildings also appear in intricate detail. These are filled with more strange objects and populated by another variety of personalities. Neither the buildings nor the mazes are particularly difficult to map, and the presence of an on-screen compass makes the process even easier.

Ubiquitous Arcade Action

Separating many of the locations in the game are what the package notes call "parallax sections." These are more traditional arcade sequences in which the player must move from one side of the screen to the other, and survive. This type of action, which has come to be known in some circles as the "Psygnosis Shuffle" or, perhaps, the "Barbarian Two-Step," is greatly simplified in *Obitus*. Villains can be seen hiding before they spring up to attack, and it is actually possible for the hero to leap out of the path of flying weapons. Mercifully, one need not be an arcade wizard to complete these action sequences.

The interface used in *Obitus* is simple and requires no typing. The player points to and clicks on icons, objects held in inventory and pieces of the surrounding graphics. In this way, two and three word commands may be constructed such as "Eat apple" or "Use dagger on distasteful person." Windows are used to deliver messages from other characters, display the hero's health status and provide general information. Movement about the screen is performed easily, either with the joystick or by clicking on a compass direction with the mouse pointer.

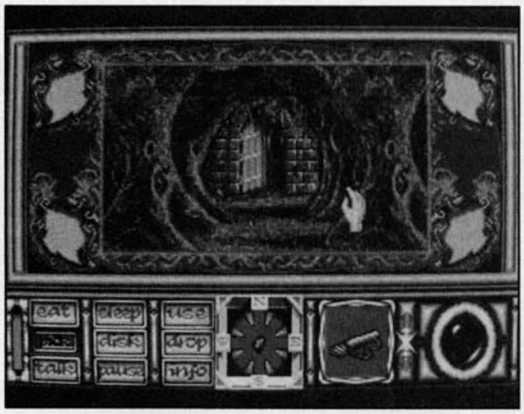
Purple Prose

One sure way to succeed in *Obitus* is to avoid reading the directions. Most of the space in this confusing documentation is taken up by a story which may or may not have anything to do with the program it accompanies. Perhaps it describes some other game which this reviewer has yet to come across. Fortunately,

the game's interface is easy to decipher without instruction and no intelligent player should have trouble doing so. But for those looking for an even greater challenge, go ahead — read the directions!

The Looks and Sounds of Psygnosis

It is difficult not to be impressed by the sounds and graphics programmed into almost any release from **Psygnosis**, and *Obitus* is no exception. The realistic sound effects are well distributed throughout its various encounters. Graphically, the game is rich in detail, imaginative in its scope of settings and makes good use of shading to enhance the game's already suspenseful atmosphere. The backgrounds, which flow and scroll in three dimensions, are particularly well executed.



Obitus' major flaw is that it lacks depth. The game would be far more satisfying were there a few mysteries or surprises lying beneath its glittering exterior. A bit of intrigue or some deeper interaction with the non-player characters (preferably at the expense of some arcade-style combat) would go a long way toward making *Obitus* first-rate entertainment (consider this a voice from the American market, crying out in the wilderness).

Inside the "Goodie Basket"

Obitus is another Psygnosis release which comes packaged with a T-shirt. Considering the purchase price of most quality computer games, this is a welcome gesture on the part of that company. In this spirit of charity, perhaps there will one day be other items of clothing included with such games. Food would also be appreciated, or perhaps a small scholarship to help the kids prepare for their education. Thanks, Psygnosis!

Obitus is provided on three copy-protected disks. A fourth, blank disk is required to save games in progress. The program allows the use of two disk drives during play, but disk swapping is required far too often. The use of a hard drive is really what the program needs but, unfortunately, does not allow.

Still and All...

Even with its lack of depth and without an adequate (or even useful) instruction manual, *Obitus* can be a satisfying experience. The fact that the arcade sections are relatively low-pressure enhances the game's playability as well as the chances that the player will survive. The program offers many hours of exploration and danger, and plenty to see. **cgw**

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A Different Set of "Jaws"

(Continued from page 22)

screen layout, hull designs of the spacecraft, a star sector guide, abbreviations and an explanation of the copy protection (look-up-the-word type).

Colorful Battles In Black & White

The graphics are 3-D in an overhead or side view. The battle area is shown on the left half of the screen, a ship control panel on the right. One can select any object to be center of the battle and zoom into or out of the area. The friendly ship is white in color and enemy ships are black, with missiles the same color as the firing ship. Neutral objects, such as space stations, star bases and planets are orange. On the right side of the screen is all the information pertaining to the spacecraft controlled and the control menus.

Into *JAWS*' Teeth

JAWS is strictly mouse-controlled and menu-driven. This works very well in actual game play. There are four command menus available to the player: Command, Displays, Control and Objects. There are over 29 commands available and each is explained in detail in the manual. Commands are also available for individual control of guided missiles and battlecraft (drones). Some of the many commands available include electronic warfare, force shields, automatic fire and tractor beams.

There are seven scenarios in the game. Five use pre-designed ships and *all* have time limits. In scenarios six and seven, one can customize the number of credits available to each side for the purchase of an initial fleet, as well as for the total campaign. The computer outfits the other side using the credits available. Other than this option (basically two campaign-style games), there is no provision for designing your own scenarios. Fortunately, this does not seem to detract from the game.

Dockyard Blueprint Blues

Ship design begins with the empty hulls. Equipment pods are added to complete the ship, using two detailed charts of hull types and pods which effectively describe equipment and fuel capacity. All pods contain various weapons and defensive systems, including electronic warfare equipment. There are three types of jump pods. These are necessary to move from system to system. They differ in cost and in time necessary to charge up prior to a jump. Charging time is particularly critical when trying to escape a battle, so the longer the charge time, the greater the exposure to danger.

Armed To The Teeth

A variety of weapons is available: laser guns; plasma guns; guided, intelligent, unguided and cluster missiles; battlecraft and tractor beams. Laser guns are effective from long range, while plasma guns are effective close in. Unguided missiles will seek the nearest object including planets, starbases and other missiles, but will not target friendly vessels. Cluster missiles are standard unguided missiles which include three MIRV warheads that can be manually released by players at a certain range. Battlecraft are essentially drones with laser guns, which can be controlled by the player or set on automatic fire at a specific target.

Any neutral object that is hit by a missile will immediately open fire on that side's ships. This can turn the tide of battle to the enemy's advantage at a critical moment, so one must be selective in opening up on targets of opportunity that may, in reality, be neutral. If one can maneuver so that the enemy opens up and accidentally hits a neutral starbase, however, one can have the joy of observing that starbase spending the remainder of the battle firing on all enemy ships.

A.I. — The Computer Bites Back

The computer opponent is highly intelligent, even in scenarios where officers are not included. The computer accurately keeps track of all missiles it has fired and will effectively use objects as shields. If the engagement is near a planet, the computer will take advantage of the cover offered by the planet, circling around and firing at the player's ship, then retreating again behind the planet.

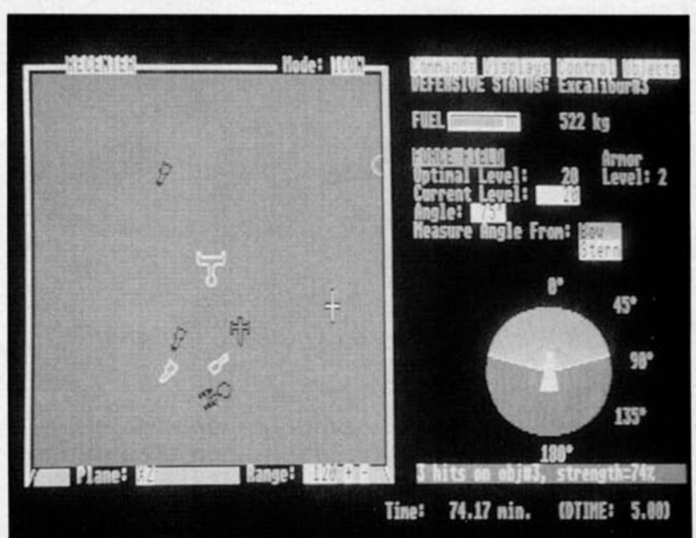
The player has the option of controlling all or just one of the ships in a multi-ship engagement. The computer will control the others and uses "artificial" officers, taking into account their skill levels when executing tactics. Officers are only available in scenarios five and seven. Their skill level and rank determines their efficiency in battle. The officer file can be edited so you can add your favorite heroes from science-fiction ("Analysis, Spock?").

In any engagement, one also has the option of giving individual orders or general orders. If opting for general orders, ships can only be told to attack, defend, withdraw and disengage. The individual ship commanders decide what targets to attack, how fast to maneuver and other pertinent battle tactics.

Worse Than Its Bite

There are a few minor problems in *JAWS*. First, the Quit command can be accidentally chosen. Obviously, in the heat of battle, such an experience can be most annoying. Second, it is possible to accidentally hit the return key during ship construction and commission that ship, ready or not. One has little chance for reconsideration of ship construction aspects while "at the old drawing board." This temperamental feature has been a promised "fix" in an upcoming revision. *[Ed. We're informed that this revision is currently available from the manufacturer.]*

Overall, however, this is an excellent tactical level combat game with a few strategic decisions (sort of an "opposite twin brother" to *Star Control*). It will appeal to those who like strategic wargaming with plenty of on-screen action. **cgw**



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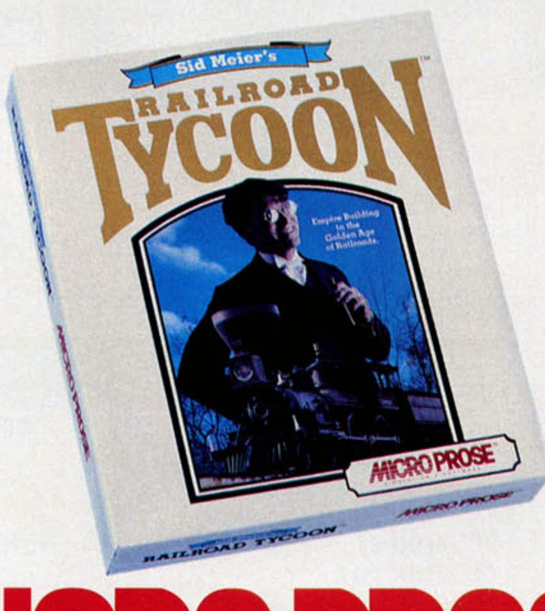
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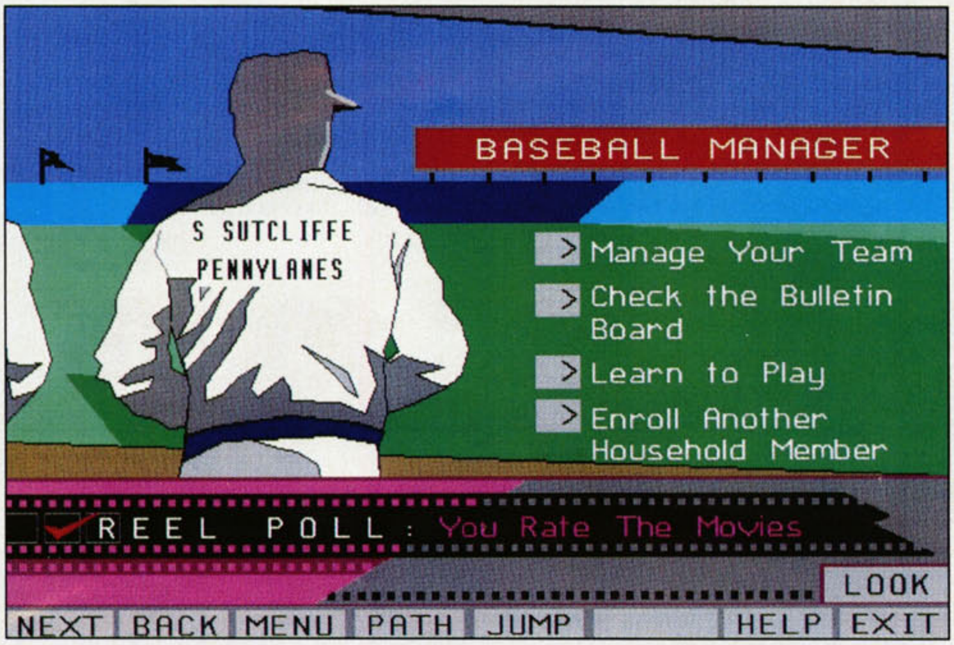
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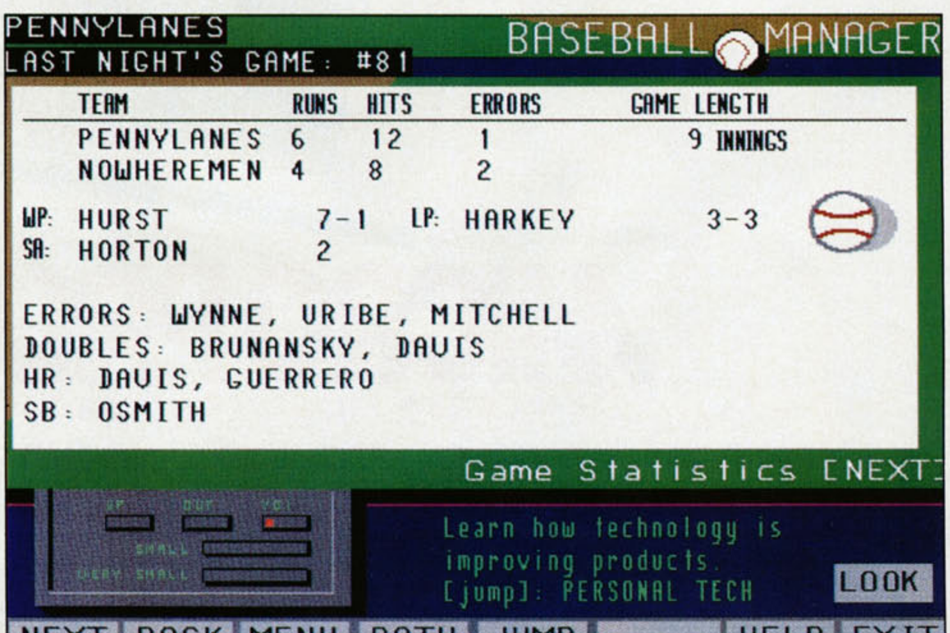


If one believes the bad publicity generated by the censorship issue with regard to electronic mail on the **PRODIGY® Interactive Personal Service**, users of the service may often feel as frustrated as the late Billy Martin kicking dirt on an umpire or Pete Rose shoving an official after allegedly being poked in the face. In vivid contrast, however, gamers need to take note of a scouting report on a particularly bright new talent for the PRODIGY® service.

Billed as a "custom choice," handled as an additional charge and licensed by the Major League Baseball Player's Association, PRODIGY® has created what appears to be the most ambitious fantasy baseball system in existence. Gamers will not only simulate general managers via drafting, balancing salaries and trading, but will be able to take on the role of manager on a *daily* basis by setting line-ups, pitching rotations and relief priorities. Other fantasy (or "rotisserie") leagues offer weekly updates based on rankings in various statistical categories. *Baseball Manager*, on the other hand, allows actual games to be played. Each day you set your lineups. That night your game is played against one of the other nine teams in your league. Your game on PRODIGY is played using the actual stats from that day in baseball. If Alan Trammel got two hits the night before, those two hits would be factored into his PRODIGY team's performance.

When PRODIGY first told us about *Baseball Manager*, we were perplexed. How can you play actual games using last night's stats? How do you resolve a game in which Dwight Gooden, pitching for the Tehachapi Steamers, throws a shutout against the Diablo Canyon Reactors (but Darryl Strawberry hit two home runs for the Reactors)? The designers of *Baseball Manager* have developed an elegant set of algorithms that resolves such seeming conundrums. Simply put, the program factors the various performances to get an averaged result. In the Gooden versus Strawberry example, Gooden would not end up getting a shutout as he did in real life but Strawberry would not get both home runs either. Probably Gooden would be charged with one home run (and an accompanying earned run) and Strawberry would get credit for one home run, not two. If Gooden had given up two or more earned runs in real baseball, Strawberry might well have gotten credit for two homers on his PRODIGY team.

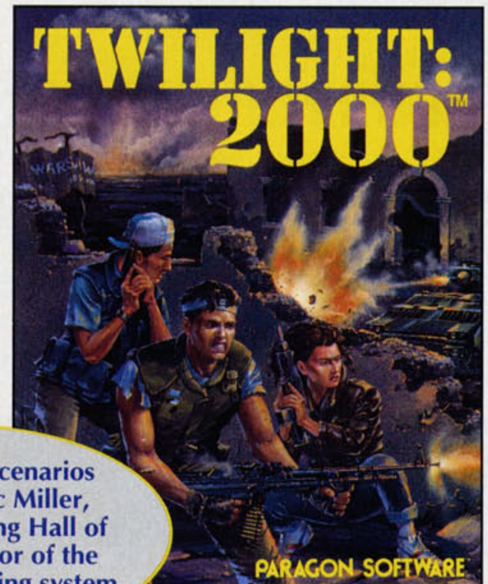
Gamers can reserve a league for themselves and nine of their friends so that *everyone* can participate in the league and *no one* gets stuck with all the bookkeeping.



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Both featuring scenarios written by Marc Miller, Adventure Gaming Hall of Famer and creator of the Traveller role-playing system.

Based on the role-playing classic from Game Designers' Workshop, **MegaTraveller 2: Quest For The Ancients** contains state-of-the-art innovations, including a completely re-designed, icon-driven interface, combat system and role-playing engine.

- The sequel to the hit MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy with over 100 of named, detailed worlds to explore
- New PAL role-playing engine lets you control one character while commanding four others; advanced character generator guarantees variety with each game
- Weapons and starship classes of all kinds; a dazzling array of characters with whom to interact

Your mission: save a world threatened by a mysterious artifact built by the Ancients, a legendary super-race thought dead for 300,000 years.

Twilight: 2000 places you in the aftermath of World War III, travelling through terrain devastated by high-tech weaponry and nuclear radiation.

- Create your character with the skills and abilities you want
- Command three other party members who respond to your orders based on *their* personalities and objectives
- State-of-the-art graphics include 3-D simulation and 2-D scaled overhead sequences
- Hundreds of weapons and vehicles make each encounter unique

Your mission: rebuild and defend the city of Krakow, Poland against an onslaught of marauders and military madmen determined to win a war the world lost.









IBM screens shown.
Actual screens may vary.

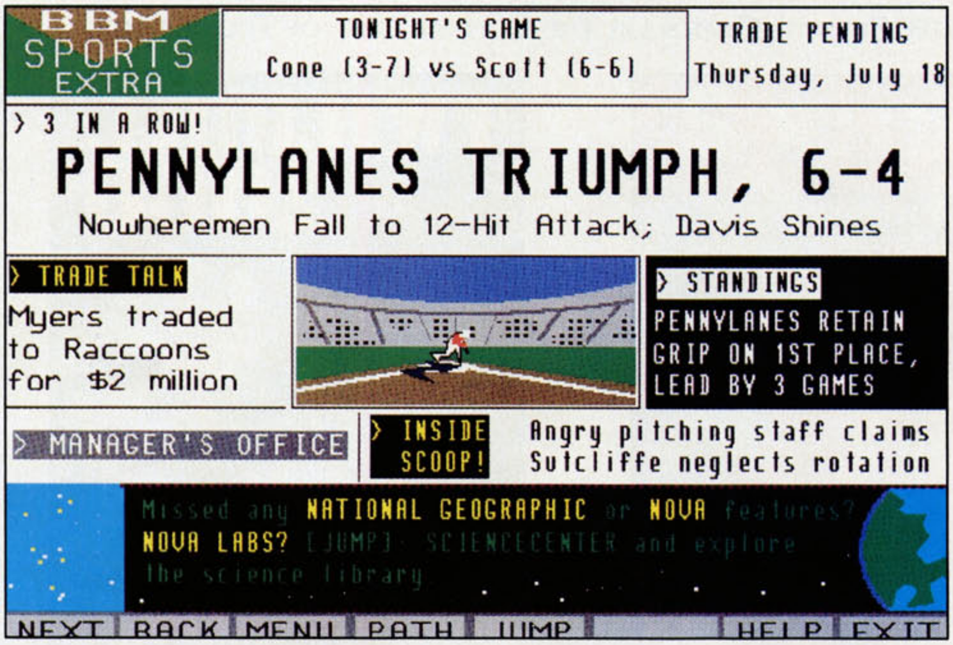


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Winner Meeting (Getting Started)

The *Baseball Manager* experience begins, naturally enough, with pre-season maneuvering. Gamers can choose to manage in either an American or National League simulation. There will be a separate league for every ten players enrolled. If one has other "PRODIG"ies ready to sign up for a league, one can "reserve" a league. If one is soloing, it is possible to opt for the first opening in the big league of your choice, American or National. In any case, the pre-season only begins when all ten players are signed on.

The real action begins with the pre-draft phase. Over the course of four days in accelerated mode or eight days in a more leisurely mode, gamers will find complete lists of players by position and must rate them in order of draft preference. This is not a pro forma proposition where one simply lists the best players in one-two-three order. One must also consider the fact that the number of other general managers who select the same first-round draft choice could cause the salary to skyrocket.

Salaries are determined by multiplying the dollar value established for a position times the number of managers who select the players in the first draft position with dollar values descending with each draft position. For example, a starting pitcher is worth $250,000 times the number of managers who selected the pitcher in the first round plus $240,000 times the number of managers who selected the pitcher in the second round and so forth.

Since there is a salary cap, one cannot simply go for the best players for every position. Compromises enter into the planning stage during this period of "scouting" the talent. Many gamers will want to consider the fan proclivity of their competitors during this phase. If one is playing against Silicon Valley gamers, for example, one may want to ignore San Francisco Giant players. Since SF Giant players would, presumably, go for a premium in a San Francisco Bay area league, you might want to avoid the artificially inflated salaries such players might get. In such a case, it might be cogent to select a comparable player from the eastern division rather than truly emulating major league owners by joining the "bidding war" on the majority's favorite. At other times, one may be willing enough to pay the high price that it is worth rating a player high enough that *any* manager who gets the player will have to pay a high salary.

Of course, the most exciting part of this phase is logging onto the PRODIGY® network every day and getting the draft results. Unlike many network games, *Baseball Manager* presents the daily draft results with a little extra showbiz. As soon as the player gets past the introductory screen, he is rewarded with a newspaper mock-up featuring a headline highlighting a major draft pick from his league and a dynamic headline selected especially to reflect his team's most impressive draft pick. From there, he can access the details on the complete draft for both the league and his team.

Fun in the Sum (Spring Training)

There is one more period of activity before the season starts. In the "Pre-Season" phase, gamers not only get the chance to standardize line-ups (versus right-handed and left-handed pitchers), starting rotations and relief priorities, but initiate trades, as well. The trading procedure works off an on-screen worksheet and requires no third party intervention. After, presumably, discussing the potential trade by electronic mail, one manager initiates the trade by filling out a trade offer worksheet. Next, the person who is receiving the trade offer has up to three days to access the trade offer. If the recipient of the trade offer wishes to deal, the program handles an acceptance, decline or counteroffer. Of course, since the trade offer only lasts three days, the recipient of the offer can simply "pocket veto" the deal by ignoring it. Once the deal is accepted by both parties, the program handles the roster adjustments overnight.

Naturally, once the season starts, gamers will be anxious to get involved with the day-to-day management of their team. However, it is still a good idea to standardize the line-ups and rotation during the pre-season. If the gamer has taken the time to set standardized line-ups, the computer program will follow the gamer's instructions on those rare occasions when the gamer cannot access PRODIGY®. If there is no standardized line-up or rotation, the computer selects its own idea of a good line-up. Anyone who has ever had the computer take over his company in a game of *CEO* knows how traumatic that can be.

Opening Play

When play begins, players continue to update line-ups and pitching rotation and handle trade offers. However, the exciting aspect is logging onto the service and getting that updated newspaper screen with the "hometown" bias toward the gamer's team. Then, each manager can check his team's overnight performance just like the box scores in a real daily paper. It's pretty heady stuff for statistics fanatics and baseball is the right game for statistics buffs.

Once the league is underway, it only takes a few minutes a day to handle all the managerial decision-making, check the latest box score and make a couple of trade offers. Then, if the gamer is still

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ORDERING INFO: Specify system. For fast delivery send cashier's check or money order. Personal & company checks allow 14 business days to clear. P.O.'s welcome. **C.O.D. charges are $4.00** In Continental U.S.A. include $4.00 for software orders 5% shipping for hardware, minimum $5.00. MasterCard and Visa orders please include card #, expiration date and signature. WI residents please include 5% sales tax. HI, AK, FPO, APO,Puerto Rico and Canadian orders, please add 6% shipping, **minimum $6.00.** All other **foreign orders add 15% shipping, min $15.00** All orders shipped outside the Continental U.S.A. are shipped first class insured U.S. mail, where available. If foreign shipping charges exceed the minimum amount, you will be charged the additional amount All goods are new and include factory warranty. We do not guarantee compatability & version #s. Due to our low prices all sales are final. **All Defective returns must have a return authorization number.** Call (414) 357-8181 to obtain an R.A. # or your return will not be accepted. Prices and availability subject to change without notice. Shipping & handling are non-refundable. We ship the latest versions available to us, updates must be handled by end user directly with the manufacturer. Not responsible for typographical errors. In an effort to be complete, some new products may not be available from the manufacturer at press time. HAVE A NICE DAY!!!

ready to talk baseball, there is a special bulletin board specifically for *Baseball Manager* leagues (that can only be accessed by PRODIGY® users signed up for the leagues). This should build community among the managers and provide a nice forum for intraleague propaganda.

Line Score

PRODIGY®'s *Baseball Manager* may be a fantasy manager's dream come true. It allows gamers to create their own leagues without having to worry about all that paperwork; it offers the ultimate advantage of a daily update; and it provides for individual games in a full season of "simulated" games. *Baseball Manager* is available only to PRODIGY service customers. It will cost $119 per person per year.

CGW's editorial staff is anxious for the new season to begin. Throw out the first ball, Mr. President! **cgw**

Reach Out and Crush Someone

Those wishing to place their own (free) ad need only send us a postcard (or use the *Notes* section of the RID card), letter, fax or E-Mail, etc. The ads themselves should serve as reasonable examples as to how to write your own. However,

- Include a brief description of the types of opponents and games you are interested in playing. Games being played other than "direct by modem" *can* be listed (trading save game disks, meeting on a BBS service or even face-to-face).
- At least one (possibly more) telephone number(s) must be included. *Do not forget the area code* and mention whether they are Home, Work or Modem numbers.
- Include your city and state so that people who call you will have both: a) a clue as to what time zone you are in, and b) recognize it when they see it on their phone bill.

We reserve the right to edit all Opponents Wanted ads to our standards of taste.

Networks

Microprose *CHQ & KOTS* tourney: (301) 771-1151.

Attention *Compuserve* users — Check out the Modem Games Forum for forums, roundtables and tournaments. New features added! Contact "Turk" at Compuserve address: [76576,1232], or type GO MODEM.

A computer modem club is forming in the Nassau County area of Long Island, NY. Organized competitions in strategy and simulation modem games will be arranged. Interested parties should contact: South Shore Computer Modem Club, PO Box 017, Baldwin, NY 11510.

By Area Code

Seeking COMMAND HQ players in Southern California area. Call Alan Emrich at Home: (213) 420-7800 (Long Beach, CA). Be careful, I'm *very* experienced at this game!

Would-be world ruler seeks opponents by modem for COMMAND HQ. Strongly prefer ???? scenario, but will play others. Wash-Balt area codes 301, 703 and 202 prefered. Long distance; answers only (sorry, guys). Contact Kevin McGee (Chesapeake Beach, MD) to arrange playing times. H-(301) 855-5328; W-(301) 286-2262. No calls after 9pm EST, please.

Opponents wanted for COMMAND HQ, KNIGHTS OF THE SKY, MODEM WARS or FIRETEAM 2200. Silicon Valley area preferred (415, 408). Contact Jim Garrett at Home: (408) 248-3568 (Santa Clara, CA).

I am interested in playing COMAND HQ with others in the Boston area. Will play any scenario. Chris Niles (617) 262-4301.

Experienced sub captain/flightleader seeks any opponent for 688 ATTACK SUB, POPULOUS or HELICOPTER SIMULATOR in 703, 202 or 301 area codes. Call me first at Home: (703) 491-9360 (Woodbridge, VA, ask for Sab). Also on Prodigy at: HVBR27A; PC-Link: Sab3.

Serious computer wargamer seeks opponents for 688 or EMPIRE. Also willing to consider on-line multi-player strategy games. Prefer S.E. players to reduce phone charges. Can be reached at (704) 294-2387, Compuserve: 76517,1162 or MCI Mail: PNielsen/PCWeek.

Veteran MODEM WARS player seeks new blood, er, players. I've played over 500 games and will even share some strategies and tips. I prefer to play the Full War scenario, but am flexible. Long distance callers welcome, as long as we split the phone bill. Contact Marc Dultz at Home: (718) 465-3292 after 9 PM, or E-Mail me on Quantum Link: MarcD. PS, bring a fire extinguisher for your ComCen!

Wargamer seeks opponents by modem for SECOND FRONT v1.1, campaign scenario, either side, *any area code*. Proven system reduces phone charges to nominal amount (details on request, but basically each player plays against the computer in alternate months and transmits save files after each game month). Contact Ed Morris (Amarillo, TX) at Work-(806) 374-9551 to arrange details.

COMMAND HQ opponent sought in 815 area code. Call Dennis at (815) 455-7034 (Crystal Lake, IL).

Opponent Wanted for COMMAND HQ, FALCON AT or any game using a modem (if I don't have it, I will get it). Call Steve Van Doorne (Chatsworth, CA) at Home-(818) 882-3138.

Conversions Received

Jack Nicklaus Course Disk Vo. 4 (Accolade) Macintosh, Apple IIGS

SimCity Graphic Sets 1 & 2 (Maxis) Amiga

Ultima VI (Origin) C-64/128

Code Name: Iceman (Sierra) Atari ST

Faces: Tris III (Spectrum HoloByte) IBM PS/1

Typhoon of Steel (SSI) IBM

Blue Max (Three-Sixty) Amiga

B.A.T. (Ubi Soft) IBM, Amiga, Atari ST

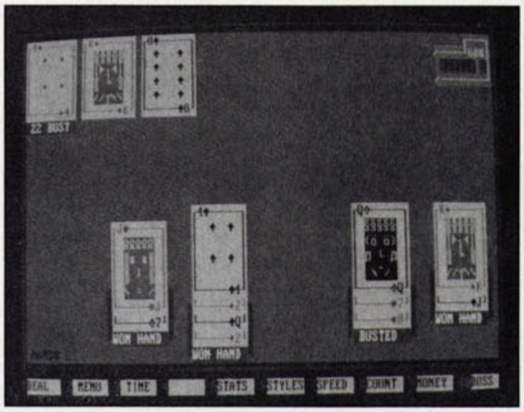
New Deal Makes Cut at 21

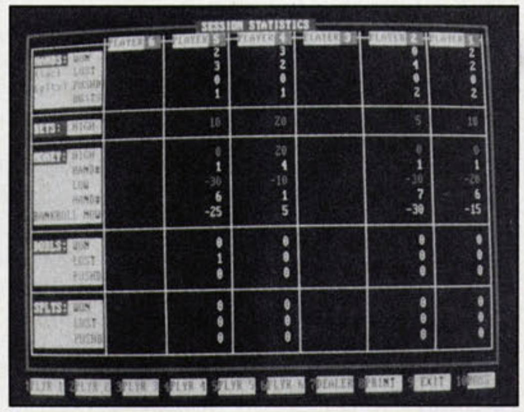
by Michael S. Lasky

TITLE:	Edward O. Thorp's Real Blackjack
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
PUBLISHER:	Villa Crespo Software 1725 McGovern St. Highland Park, IL 60035

Real Blackjack is deceptively simple to play, but equally complex to master. Therein lies its brilliance. For all its clunky programming, *Real Blackjack* truly mirrors the '21' game as played in casinos around the world and actually *teaches* players how to master the game for the day when real money is bet, not just easy-to-spend "computer bucks."

Private Lessons





For beginners who are thinking of eventually playing blackjack in Las Vegas or Atlantic City, this has to be one of the most informative and least expensive tutors available. It doesn't hurt that the way *Real Blackjack* has been designed, it is also extremely fun, even addicting, to play.

The default settings for *Real Blackjack* are based on the standard Las Vegas game rules. The best hand is a two-card 21 or "Blackjack." Players may continue to draw cards without going over the score of 21, as doing that is an automatic loss. That's where the gambling comes in: one has to figure out what are the odds that asking for another card that will bring you to or close to 21 without going over. Alternately, a player must consider *not* taking another card because it looks like the dealer will be forced to go over 21 and, therefore, 'bust.' Standard casino rules are that the dealer must hit with 16 points showing and stand when 17 points are showing. If the dealer has the same score as the player, it's called a 'push' and nobody wins or loses.

The dealer or 'house' gives two cards to each computer-set or player-set bettor at the table. The dealer always takes one card down and one card showing. If the up card is an ace, then "insurance" is offered to players. The insurance offer is another bet entirely.

Your Own "House Rules"

What sets this package apart from other computer blackjack games is that it allows the user to customize playing strategies for all players and create tables of player actions that encompass all gambling circumstances. These include such decisions as when the player does or does not ask for another card or increase the bet. With blackjack expert Edward O. Thorp as the guide (the man who later went on to invent stock market "programmed trading") and the statistics for each hand tallied by the computer, *Real Blackjack* gives the serious gambler and novice alike a computer game that is also a potentially profitable educator.

Money Management 101

Setting up the individual styles and dollar management profiles of each player is a bit mind-boggling at first. The manual offers little immediate assistance, but the powerful on-line help facility provides clear information to handle all the preliminary housekeeping before play. (For those users who want to have an actual manual, a print option in the help menu reproduces the 61-page manual. Once the print process is started, however, there is no turning back short of rebooting the system.) The manual, whether read on-line or printed, is a virtual textbook study for beginners and experienced players alike. It makes it clear that blackjack is more than just a card game – it is a math puzzle and a psychological strategy.



Virtually every aspect of blackjack has been covered by *Real Blackjack*. For those players who want to learn how to count cards, something casinos discourage by using more than one deck or reshuffling often, there is a *count system* that will maintain individual tallies of cards.

Tutor Dynasty

By far, one of the most enjoyable features is the Tutor key. Push the Tutor key and the player will be told (based on the computer's or player's pre-set style tables) whether to take another card, to stand, to double down or to split the hand. Sometimes, the advice will seem positively ridiculous based on the eventual outcome. Of course, advice is based on statistical probabilities and not on definites. There are no definites in a game of chance except, perhaps, that the odds favor the house.

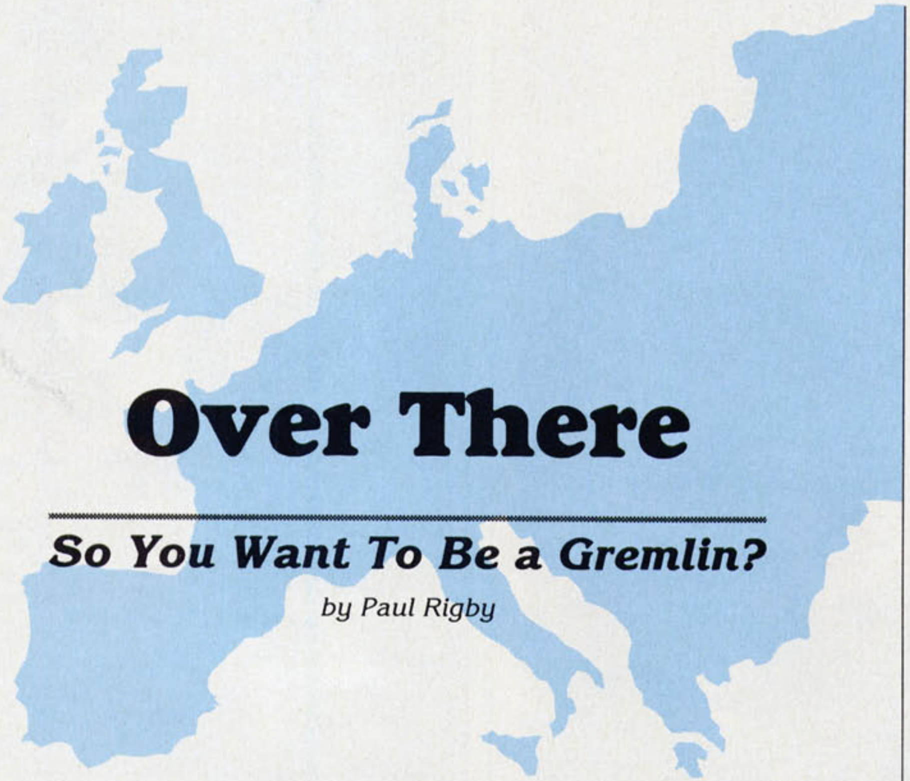
Real Blackjack is menu-driven and uses the ten function keys exclusively. While this makes the user interface extremely simple, it remains fairly unsophisticated. The game cries out for mouse control or mnemonic key controls such as S for stand and H for hit. Actual programming was done, amazingly enough, in BASIC. Colors are vivid no matter what the graphics capability of the computer — CGA, EGA or VGA. That's because the game was designed in IBM text mode, according to publisher Dan Sejzer.

Sound features basic IBM toots and whistles (which might be the reason that silence is the default). The speed of deals can be adjusted from a stupefyingly slow pace to a "now-you-see-it-now-you-don't" card shark's blur. The default setting is in the middle. A bug in the program turns off the tutor key when speed is set at maximum.

Blackjack in the Information Age

Since it takes some effort to set up player styles, games can be saved for replay with favorite settings. Be warned, however, that they do take up considerable disk space and are slow to load when recalled. Once loaded, they provide an information screen with player setups and the time and date of the saved version. That is typical for *Real Blackjack*. This is truly a game for the information age. Screen after screen documents player actions and designs. Any screen can be dumped to the printer for more deliberate study.

Edward O. Thorp's Real Blackjack is not perfect, however. It does come with a seemingly clever (albeit user-unfriendly) copy protection scheme. The disk can be copied but the game only begins after a random five-digit password code is input. The codes are listed in the documentation but are printed on the infamous non-reproducible dark red paper. The paper color prevents photocopying but also defeats most users, even the ones with good eyesight. One must tilt the code sheet in bright light to get the number. Villa Crespo publisher, Dan Sejzer, says he has not received any complaints about this protection scheme. Well, he has now. Fortunately, he also receives enough praise for the game that it turns out to be worth the eyestrain to move past the protection. It is singularly one of the best casino game/tutorials available today. **cgw**



Over There

So You Want To Be a Gremlin?

by Paul Rigby



Elite Plus



Midwinter II: Flames of Freedom

As a board game it was voted "Best Selling New Game of 1989" (source: Neilson Retail Audit, by value). It was also the reason **Sierra** had to change the name of one of their top selling titles to *Quest for Glory*. *Hero-Quest: The Computer Game* by UK software house, **Gremlin Graphics**, is based upon the successful fantasy role-playing board game.

Enter the underground realm of Morcar, the (all together now) evil wizard, where treasures lie in wait — along with the rather dangerous guardians. The dark caverns contain many dangers and traps. Taking an isometric viewpoint, each game level is, apparently, a new, unique adventure set in a different underground stronghold. Explore the tunnels and rooms while on the look-out for nasties. Every completed adventure takes you one step nearer to becoming a Hero. There are four adventurers: Barbarian, Elf, Wizard and Dwarf. Release is expected around Easter of this year for all major formats.

Cortizone is a text/graphic adventure currently available on the ST from British publisher **Zenobi Software**. Created using the STOS adventure utility from **Incentive Software**, the plot surrounds a building called the Zone, a hospital which was converted after The Great War to hold both human and robotic criminals at little expense to the weakened government. Conditions are barbaric as the inner building is mainly unguarded, leaving prisoners to fight over the limited resources that are periodically dropped into the building via a supply chute. Your aim is to gain entry into the Zone by any means and find the mad doctor thought to be responsible for the creation of the Adrenal Bomb (containing bacterial poisons), while obtaining information to find and defuse this lethal weapon.

The adventure arrives on two disks, with one whole disk given over to the introduction. This is a novel method of offering the player the plot in an interesting format. Created with STOS, it informs the player on all aspects of the background story via a continuous printout. On occasion small, digitized graphics illustrate the text. Once this is finished the game is loaded from disk two. The game itself is divided into two windows. The upper window displays color digitized pictures. Below this graphic window is the text area. Priced at £4.99 from **Zenobi Software**, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancashire, England, OL12 7NX.

Remember the *Dungeon-Master*-in-space type game, *Corporation*? The game was mentioned in these pages and is subject to imminent release in the USA. Well, *Corporation* is back. In the original mission, as a top agent for Zodiac, you infiltrated the headquarters of the Universal Cybernetic Corporation and destroyed their laboratories and the vile mutants within them. Now, a new threat has risen. The Government's sources on the street have sent word that strange things are going down at UCC's North American headquarters. With your valuable experience, you're the obvious man for the job. There are 16 complete new levels to penetrate in your search for UCC's secret laboratory. On this mission you will encounter even stranger and

TIMEQUEST™

The unthinkable has happened — a renegade from the Temporal Corps has stolen a time travel machine and gone into the past to alter critical events in human history. Only you can prevent this madman from rewriting history and destroying current civilization.

A high speed chase through time, TIMEQUEST is a classic adventure game that features pageantry, danger, and puzzle-oriented adventure. The game is epic in scope, spanning four continents and three thousand years — from Stonehenge to Hitler.

Criss-crossing time and space, you will travel to England, Rome, Peking, Cairo, Babylon/Baghdad, and Mexico from 1361 BC to 1940 AD, meeting Caesar, Hitler, Napoleon, Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun, Cleopatra, Michaelangelo, and many others.

Written by Bob Bates, author of *Sherlock: The Riddle of the Crown Jewels* and *Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur,* TIMEQUEST is the latest from Legend Entertainment, the company that brought you the hit game *Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All the Girls.* A treat for science-fiction fans and adventure enthusiasts alike, the game features:

- ☐ high resolution EGA graphics
- ☐ superb musical score featuring RealSound as well as Roland and AdLib support
- ☐ unique Legend screen design with pushbutton options
- ☐ menu driven parser

For IBM-PC/Tandy/compatibles.



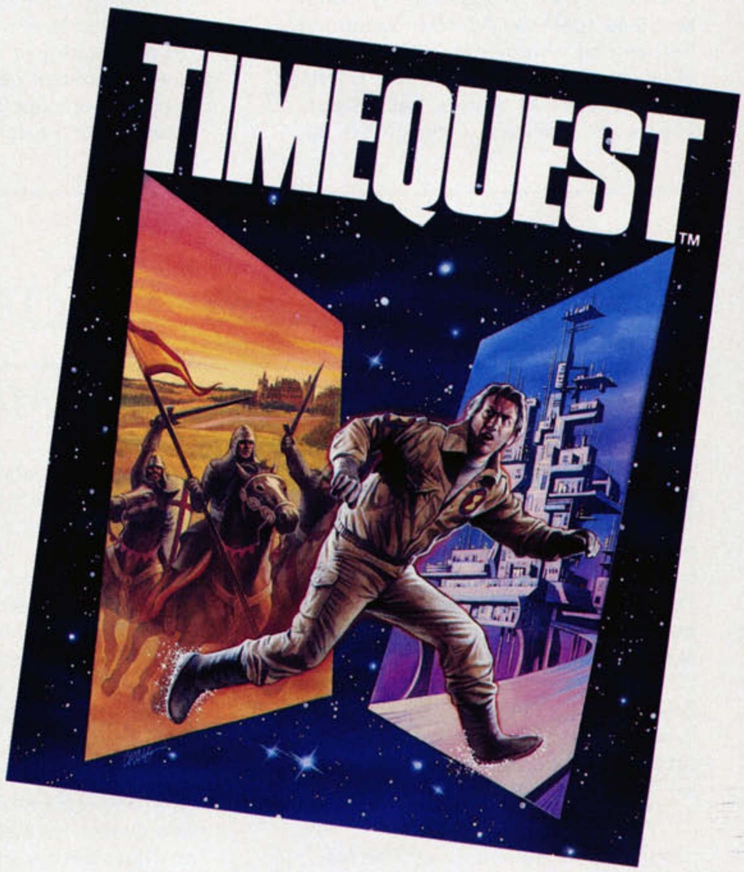
Rome 1940. Fool Hitler and Mussolini into thinking that Churchill has surrendered.



England 452 A.D. Escape a death-blow from Riothamus, the real-life King Arthur.



"Legend is the company that finally got the adventure game interface right." — *Computer Gaming World*



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EGA graphics shown above. Actual screens may vary.

Circle Reader Service #37

more dangerous creations. Amiga and ST owners, who will need the original *Corporation* game disk to play the mission disk, can obtain the data disk for £14.99.

Will it never lay down and die? That space combat and trading game, *Elite*, is back. Via the **Microprose UK** label, **Rainbird**, and renamed *Elite Plus*, the gameplay is promised to remain the same. However, there have been many updates and bolted-on features. The most noticeable feature is the solid 3-D graphics in VGA (and other, lesser, modes). A re-designed, icon-driven interface speeds the game along. Rainbird promises new "information gathering" and "map reading" sequences plus sound board support (Roland and AdLib). *Elite Plus* is a PC release retailing at £34.99.

By the same development team that produced **Microprose**'s *Midwinter* is *Midwinter 2: Flames of Freedom*, to be published on PC, Amiga and ST. As the best field agent the Atlantic Federation has, you are charged with the execution of highly dangerous clandestine missions on each of the 41 islands. Each island has its own political, administrative and cultural perspectives, so each mission will require different aspects of your chosen physical, mental and psychological skills.

The plot goes something like this. Maestro? Music please.... "In the more temperate equatorial reaches of the Atlantic, only one of forty-two islands held out a hand, welcoming the survivors into the Atlantic Federation, a force for peace, prosperity and democracy. But the new home is threatened by the evil Saharan Empire, a mighty military dictatorship based on the African mainland, already enslaving the other island communities, and ultimately intent on conflict with the Federation." So you must help aid the individual island's indigenous freedom fighters, and thus encourage the liberation of as many islands as possible before the big push by the evil empire.

Features of *Midwinter II* include a sophisticated character profile generator allowing you to choose your own looks, sex, psychology and physical characteristics; different games modes including training to practice any aspect of the game before the campaign section is tackled; a 250,000-square-mile, 3-D, light-sourced terrain area; auto route options allowing you to plan and execute within the 3-D environment immediately; and interaction with around 4,000 characters, each with his or her own personal profile.

Note: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World, 318 Kensington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY. Telephone: 01144-51-263-6306.

Miles Better Software, 219/221 Cannock Road, Chadsmoor, Cannock, Staffordshire, England, WS11 2DD. Telephone: 01144-543-466-577/8/80; Fax: 01144-543-466-579.

Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8 Buckwins Square, Burnt Mills, Basildon, Essex, England, SS13 1BJ. Telephone: 01144-268-590-766; Fax: 01144-268-590-076.

All of the above telephone numbers assume you can dial direct. If you have any trouble contact the international operator. **cgw**

Inside the Industry

Sierra/Broderbund Merger Intent Announced

On March 8, 1991, publicly-held **Sierra On-Line** and privately-held **Broderbund Software** announced the signing of a letter of intent to merge. The new company formed is expected to be called **Sierra-Broderbund, Inc.**. Under this arrangement, Sierra CEO Ken Williams would become the CEO of the consolidated company, while Broderbund CEO Doug Carlston will take over the reins as Broderbund President. Broderbund's current president, Ed Auer, will serve as president of a newly-formed manufacturing and sales unit.

Sierra stock jumped more than two points on the next day of trading after the announcement that it would acquire Broderbund in a stock swap estimated by the *Wall Street Journal* at a value of over $88 million. Though the letter of intent indicates that Broderbund would, in effect, become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sierra, the primary impact of the merger can be summarized in CEO Williams' observation that, "This really is a 'merger of equals' in that, post-consolidation, Broderbund and Sierra will exist as sister companies sharing a common distribution mechanism." Those who have observed the relationships in the rapidly expanding Sierra family since the **Dynamix** acquisition can affirm the desire of Sierra's leadership to allow its subsidiary companies to continue in their creative and technological expertise while establishing more solid financial and marketing foundations.

The joint statements of the two company executives indicated their mutual belief that the consolidated company had a beneficial impact in both product lines and fiscal resources. No specific details were provided, but Carlston's expectation that "...we should enjoy substantial synergies in our publishing efforts, primarily through technology sharing and marketing efficiencies" delineates the initial cooperation to be seen under the new agreement.

Finally, the financial stability gained from the merger poises the consolidated corporation to exploit its fiscal and technological resources so as to compete on a worldwide basis. This not only provides for expansion, but also creates a *de facto* defense against potentially hostile maneuvers by firms which specialize in takeovers and liquidation.

The merger agreement sends positive signals of a "coming of age" of the larger publicly-held entertainment software publishers, but underlines the doubt and confusion surrounding **Mediagenic**'s current status as producer of disk-based software. The merger decision testifies to the entertainment software industry's greater awareness of a need for increased capital in order to publish continually more sophisticated projects in the future and the knowledge that other entertainment industries may want a future stake in interactive entertainment. **cgw**

COMING SOON!

Elite + (IBM)	APRIL
Secret Weapons Luft. (IBM)	APRIL
Midieval Lords (IBM)	APRIL
Death Knights Krynn	APRIL
Civil War (SSI) (IBM)	APRIL
Falcon 3.0 (IBM)	APRIL
Road to Rhine (IBM)	MAY
Avenger A-10 (IBM)	MAY
Gunship 2000 (IBM)	MAY
Carriers at War (IBM)	JUNE
Flight of Intruder (AMIGA)	JULY
F-117 (IBM)	AUGUST
Darkland (IBM)	SEPTEMBER
Civilization (IBM)	OCTOBER
Armada 2525 (IBM)	(?)

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Curse Azure Bonds	34	34
Dragon Strike	34	34
Dragon Wars	34	34
Dungeon Master	-	28
Dungeon Master 2	-	28
Eye of Beholder	34	-
Federation	33	-
Heroes Quest	39	39
Heroes Quest 2	39	-
Kings Bounty	21	-
Kings Quest 1-3	34	34
Kings Quest 4	39	39
Kings Quest 5 VGA	45	-
Kings Quest 5 EGA	39	-
Legend of Faerghail	34	34
Lemmings	-	34
Loom	39	39
Lord of the Rings	36	-
Magic Candle	34	-
Might & Magic	19	-
Might & Magic 2	34	39
Pirates	19	19
Pool of Radience	34	34
Secret Monkey Isle	39	39
Secret Silver Blades	34	-
Space 1889	33	-
Spirit of Excaliber	34	34
The Immortal	-	34
Tunnels & Trolls	21	-
Ultima 4	39	-
Ultima 5	39	39
Ultima 6	45	-

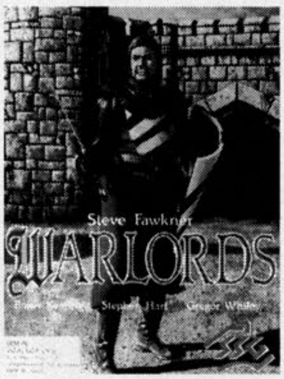
PRESENT

	IBM	AMI
Count Down	39	-
Covert Action	37	-
It Came /Desert	21	34
It Came /Desert 2	-	13
Savage Empire	39	-
Spell Casting 101	39	-

FUTURE

	IBM	AMI
BattleTech 2	33	-
Buck Rogers	33	33
Captive...Excellent!	-	34
Hard Nova	34	-
Light Speed	37	-
Mega Traveller	39	-
MechWarrior	34	-
Overlord	33	33
Renegade Leg. Inter	39	-
Rise of Dragon	33	-
StarControl	34	-
StarFlight 1	15	-
StarFlight 2	34	-
Wing Commander	45	-
Wing Co. Secr. Miss.	21	-

SPECIAL of the MONTH!



WARLORDS

Basically described as EMPIRE gone medievil or SWORD OF ARAGON meets REACH FOR THE STARS. Either way, this game will keep you and your friends up until 6 in the morning. Different races fight over a continent capturing castles which produce a variety of armies. Dragons, the undead, and magical items add spice to the game. Up to eight players may paricipate at once as the game is divided into separate turns. Gorgeous graphics depict mountains, rivers and woods. Each country's armies have their own distinct uniforms, color and qualities. Races include elves, humans, dwarves, etc. EGA or VGA only. Mouse and hard drive supported. 640K.
NOT TANDY COMPATABLE.

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STRATEGY

PRE WW II

	IBM	AMI
Ancient Art War (BROD)	31	-
Ancient War Sea (BROD)	31	-
Bandit Kings China (KOEI)	39	39
Battles of Napoleon (SSI)	34	-
Civil War Vol. 1 (SSG)	28	-
Civil War Vol. 2 (SSG)	28	-
Civil War Vol. 3 (SSG)	28	-
Centurian Def. Rome (E.A.)	34	-
Decision at Gettsburg (TIGL)	34	-
Genghis Khan (KOEI)	39	39
Gettysburg (SSI)	39	-
Gold of Americas (SSG)	28	28
Grand Fleet (SIMCAN)	39	-
Knights of Sky (MICROPR)	37	-
Nobunaga's Amb. 2 (KOEI)	39	-
Prelude to Jutland (GQ)	29	-
Red Baron VGA (DYNAMIX)	39	-
Red Baron EGA (DYNAMIX)	39	-
Romance 3 Kingdoms (KOEI)	46	-
Revolution '76 (BRITT)	34	-
Sons of Liberty (SSI)	9	-
Warlords (SSG)	32	32
War of the Lance (SSI)	34	-
Waterloo (SSI)	39	-

WORLD WAR II

	IBM	AMI
Action Stations V. 3.0	34	-
Action N. Atlantic (GQ)	29	-
Carriers at War (SSG)	-	-
Ger. Raider Atlantis (GQ)	29	-
Banzai (GQ)	29	-
B. Tank Barbarossa (S.C.)	39	-
Battlehawks '42 (LUCAS)	34	-
Bismarck (GQ)	29	-
Europe Ablaze (SSG)	-	-
Fire Brigade (PANTHER)	34	34
Fleet Med (SIM CAN)	39	-
Halls Montezuma (SSG)	28	28
In Harms Way (SIM CAN)	39	-
Kreigsmarine (SIM CAN)	39	-
Long Lance (SIM CAN)	39	-
Malta Storm (SIM CAN)	39	-
Marianas Turkey Shoot (GQ)	29	-
Midway(GQ)	29	-
Panzer Battles (SSG)	28	-
Panzer Strike (SSI)	-	-
River Plate (GQ)	29	-
Rommel N. Africa(SSG)	28	-
Russia (SSG)	-	-
Second Front (SSG)	39	39
Sherman M-4 (EURO)	34	34
Silent Service 2 (MICROPR)	37	-
Storm Across Europe (SSI)	39	39
Their Finest Hour (LUCAS)	39	39
Typhoon of Steel (SSI)	-	39

SOUND CARDS

Ad Lib	99
Soundblaster	158

MODERN

	IBM	AMI
A.T.P. (SUB LOGIC)	39	-
A-10 Tank Killer (DYNA)	34	34
Command HQ (MICROPL)	37	-
F-14 Tomcat (ACTIVIS)	34	-
F-16 Combat Pilot (E.A)	19	-
F-19 Stealth Fight (MICROPR)	42	37
Flight /Intruder (S.HOLOBY)	39	-
Flight Sim4.0		
5th Eskrada (SIM CAN)	39	39
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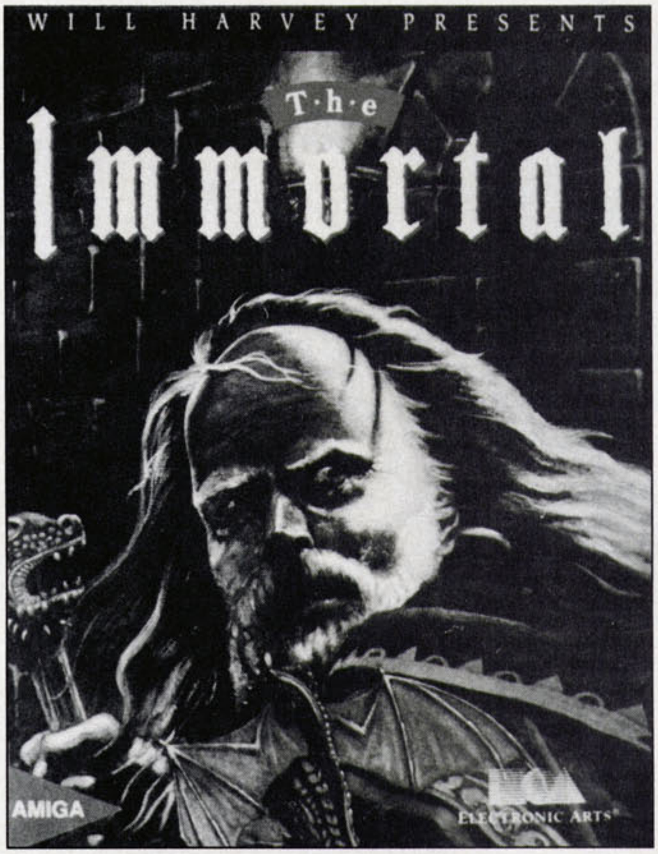
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Do You Want to Live Forever?

Will Harvey's The Immortal

by Matt Laurence

Fantasy games have come a very long way over the last ten years. From the textual charm and linearity of *Zork* to the massive graphic worlds presented in the *Ultima* series, gamers have been exposed to ever more breathtaking graphics and interactive storylines. Some of the most recent offerings are so fluid and flexible that one easily forgets the interface and gets sucked right in to the alternate universe in question. The best of the breed allow users to see the world in graphic detail while still keeping the imagination alive and involved, blending action with strategy, brawn with brain. **Electronic Arts** is making a bid at this ultimate action/adventure game market with their newest offering, *The Immortal*.



Pass the Torch, Please

With very little pomp or circumstance, players find their on-screen persona standing in the dark, damp corner of a small stone antechamber above the seething depths of the dungeon of Erinoch. Seething is the right word, too, as it is filled with such obstacles as giant worms, invisible shades, trolls, pit traps, slimes, rooms of death, goblins, irritable dwarves, massive puzzles and unconventional locking systems that would give the best thieves pause. The player's mission, should he choose to accept it (although buying the game usually entails acceptance), is to send his on-screen character in search of the player's wizardly mentor, Mordamir, by following the trail said wizard had left behind on his final expedition in search of the great dragon. His journal and one's own keen wits are all there are to go on and it is a long and harrowing journey to the bottom of the pits.



While some adventure games hurl characters right into the story, leaving them entirely on their own to discover the mysteries and dangers that await, *The Immortal* comes with a fairly detailed manual that lends guidance through some of the strategies and techniques usable throughout the game. It even includes a guide that takes players step-by-step through the first level (which is a good thing, since even the first level contains some tricks that might take players days to figure out on their own).

TITLE:	The Immortal
SYSTEM:	Amiga, Apple IIGS Atari ST, Nintendo
REVIEWED:	Atari ST
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Will Harvey
DISTRIBUTOR:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA

Tome It May Concern

Donning a wizard's robes is no easy task, but the excellent manual includes very complete directions on how to move, fight and vanquish foes with (relative) ease. It also includes excerpts from Mordamir's personal journal of his exploits in the caverns, with tips on combat, biographies of characters that will be encountered, hints and clues for later levels and a very welcome off-disk copy protection scheme.

Regardless of the somewhat time-worn plot (which is conveyed with a sense of somber firmness that pushes it just over the edge into taking-itself-just-a-hair-too-seriously-land), the game's selling point must be its graphics. They are quite impressive and lavish in detail, while not breaking any truly new ground. The most miniscule renderings are marvelous, from the swishing of wizardly robes as the character saunters down the evil corridors-o'-doom, to the extraordinarily natural way in which the torches and candles flicker and flare.

Eight Million Ways to Die?

There are, of course, lots of lovely, graphic ways to die. Players can have the flesh stripped from their bones by sentient pools of creeping, acidic slime; they can be hacked to ribbons by goblins or trolls, dissolving into a bloody puddle of organic muck; they can be blown to bits by having hundreds of explosive spores driven into their character's quivering body (a personal favorite); they can be skewered, roasted, smashed, dropped, poisoned or executed by any of a large number of other exciting methods that will aid players in shuffling off this immortal coil.

Though *The Immortal* tries to position itself as a computer role-playing game, it is not completely successful. The action sequences, particularly combat scenarios, are fairly well-executed and the puzzles/traps are clever enough to require a good bit of brain twisting to solve. However, the big problem with *The Immortal* is in the very structure of the game. While trying to be action-oriented, the game manages to keep an adventuring flavor but tends to be excessively linear in its approach. There is little room for creative experimentation in the game, since one's path is more or less clear, and attributes/skills are not improved. *The Immortal* is basically an intensely graphic action-adventure masquerading as a CRPG. While one can move his wizard wherever he likes within a level, almost all tasks must be completed in a specific order to move on. Most CRPGs allow room for error, but one misplaced fire button in *The Immortal* can send characters whimpering back to the very beginning.

Wishing You Could Save Yourself

Another problem with *The Immortal*'s linear setup is the fact that one can only begin games from certain specific points. The player is given a certificate number at the end of each level, which can later be used to begin the game from that level rather than starting at the top of the dungeon every time. Some of the levels, however, are quite large and time-consuming; thus, if the last remaining fireball is accidently lobbed into a wall or misses the target, it will be time to begin the level over. Don't miss any vital objects along the way, either, or there may be an exceptionally sticky situation several levels later on.

If games could be saved from any point within a level, it would be far less annoying to have to restart. But when confronted with sudden death within inches of the goal, it is frustrating (and not a little tedious) to have to retrace steps covered fifty times before. Finding oneself quickly mangled is extremely easy even for veteran players, given the tricky nature of some of the maneuvers.

Losing Controls

The controls are another place where *The Immortal* falls a bit flat. The joystick control is somewhat spotty, not always responding smoothly or accurately to commands (this reviewer tried the game with two different brands of joystick and both suffered from the same difficulties). This control problem, combined with the three-dimensional perspective, makes it difficult to move deftly as is required in certain circumstances. It is far too easy, for example, to move the wizard right back out a door he just entered, often exposing him to the ravages of some slathering creature he was trying to escape. Choosing items and spells is also accomplished with the joystick, and this arrangement can lead to some unfortunate mishaps, such as using a vital or dangerous item at the wrong time, inadvertently blowing one's on-screen incarnation to smithereens.

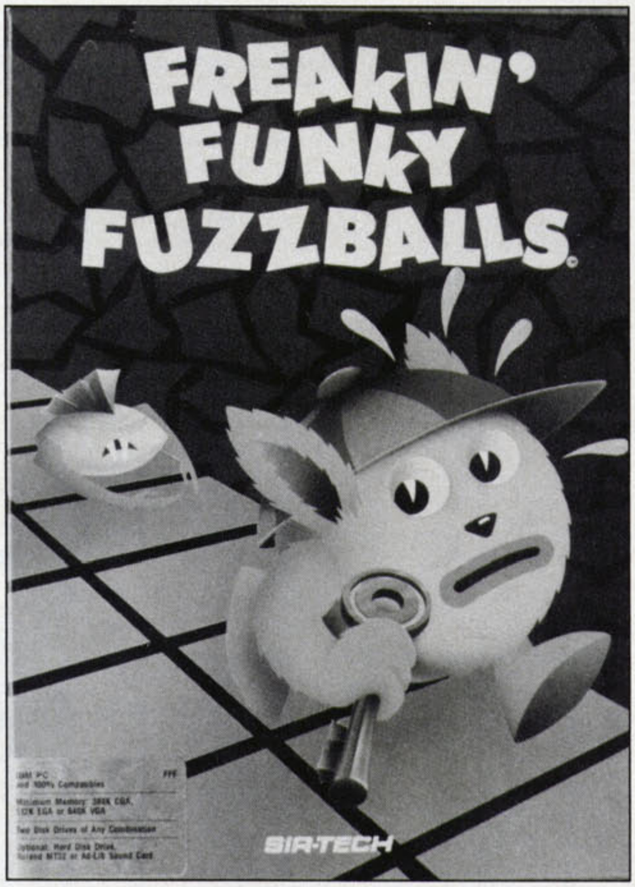
The Immortal, while "gamely" attempting to forge to the front of the CRPG market, misses the target. The game is stylish and atmospheric with superb audiovisual frills, but in spite of its positioning, it is better suited to clever adventurers with an accurate wrist and a lot of patience than the traditional CRPG market. **cgw**

What's In a Name?

Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs

by G. Marc Clupper

TITLE:	Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs
SYSTEM:	MS/PC-DOS
PRICE:	$29.95
DESIGNER:	Ian Currie and Robert Koller
PUBLISHER:	Sir-Tech Software, Inc. Ogdensburg, NY



In a world of ever-increasing numbers of arcade games, one must wonder if the concepts behind these products will ever become stale. As game designers pawn off new versions of old products, the appeal of such games dwindles. However, on rare occasions, a publisher will earnestly submit an original twist on old arcade inspirations. **Sir-Tech Software** has done just that in their latest release, *Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs*.

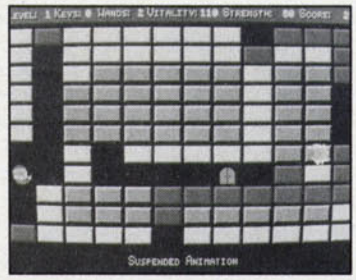
Shake The Dust Off Your Shoes

Fuzzballs is based upon the adventures of fictional creatures known as "Fuzzballs." These diminutive creatures bear a strong resemblance to household dust bunnies. Hiding behind those hard-to-reach places, they appear only occasionally and, when one does make a public appearance, they are unjustly swept away or trampled under foot. Now, in *Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs*, the player commands one of these little guys in a bid to end the eternal prospects of future mistreatment.

The player moves, via numeric keypad, throughout a series of fifteen levels of floors and mazes in an effort to gain access to a subsequent level. Each of the five "worlds" is unique in the items that can be found. As a fuzzball progresses, it is constantly chased by a single, ill-mannered beast with an intent to kill. Fuzballs have their own defenses to use against such dangerous enemies, however. As a fuzzball crosses the screen(s) in either diagonal or straight lines of movement, the floor gives way and changes colors. A normal floor can be passed twice before disappearing. In the "maze worlds," the floor remains, although points still may be scored by crossing over each space.

It's a Fuzzy Life

Each of the five worlds in *Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs* has its own theme. The first is Ancient Times, in which fuzzballs must navigate over a single board that changes in design every level. The Funky Gardens (level two) are spread over several map



boards. Enemies challenge you on each board. Later worlds include Modern Day, Future Space and Darkness. Players receive bonus scores for completely searching every space on each level.

The player's enemy moves on a one-to-one basis so that a quick finger may successfully bypass its dangerous bite. Another method to circumvent the presence of these pests is to lead them onto an island made by the disappearing floors and using magic wands to cross the gaps created. Remember, the enemy can use wands as well, and will do its best to turn the player's fuzzball into a snack.

What a Fuzzball Might Call "Home"

As the fuzzball searches an area, food, armor or special items will randomly appear. Food is a necessary element to survival as it replaces lost vitality caused by the enemy. Keys may also be found in these worlds and are required to enter the next level. Other items include rings (which increase the fuzzball's vitality), scrolls and potions. Potions restore a fuzzball's vitality to or near its maximum. Scrolls are another story. Once a scroll is evoked, one of six events will occur, only two of which are useful. Other than invisibility and enlightenment, a fuzzball will usually be better off not making use of scrolls.

Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs has two difficulty levels, one- or two-player modes allowing up to ten individuals to compete for the highest score and level, and a high score screen. The colorful screens are pleasant to watch and are clearly designed. The accompanying manual is concise and provides many useful tips and strategies to players. The only minus would have to be the separate black-on-red number check used for copy protection. The color combination is tricky enough on the eyes without the print being so small.

Call the Fuzz

Overall, the concept of the game is fascinatingly simple, but the true nature of strategy quickly becomes evident as the player must learn to maneuver around the enemy and avoid being stranded on an island of his own creation. While some may find *Fuzzballs* only mildly amusing, it does provide for some intriguing facets of arcade action combined with a bit of the strategy planning of adventure games. *Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs* is an addictive pursuit reminiscent of *Tetris* and other arcade adventures and provides a sometime distraction from the seriousness of daily life. Why, there's even an infamous "Boss Key" {F4}. **CGW**

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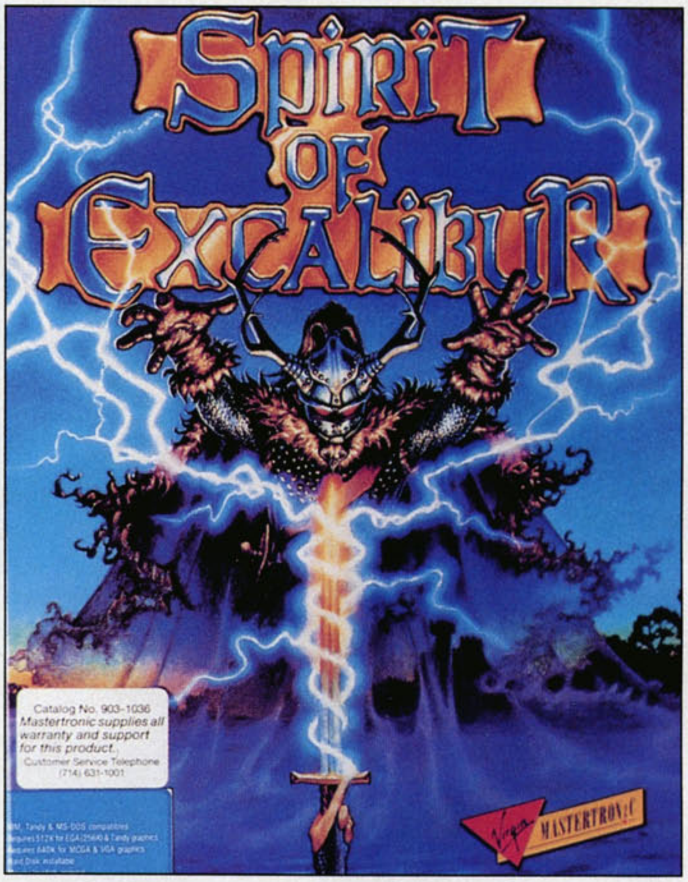
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Arthur! Arthur!

Virgin Mastertronic's Spirit of Excalibur

by Todd Threadgill

TITLE:	Spirit of Excalibur
SYSTEMS:	IBM, Macintosh, Amiga, Atari ST, Apple IIGS
REVIEWED:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Synergistic Software
PUBLISHER:	Virgin Mastertronic Irvine, CA



Arthur, regal leader of the Knights of the Round Table, is dead and his realm is rapidly falling into disarray. Sir Lancelot du Lac, the Round Table's most valiant knight, has retreated to parts unknown, taking many of Arthur's best fighters with him. Hostile forces threaten what remains of the realm and, as Lord Constantine, Arthur's successor to the throne, the player must stand firm against the invaders and preserve the realm's integrity and glory. To fail would bring about a Dark Age that would last a thousand years. What's a new king to do?

Spirit of Excalibur represents **Virgin Mastertronic**'s most impressive foray yet into what it terms a "new genre in interactive computer entertainment" – the "Fantasy Epic." Combining lush graphics and strategic decision-making with elements of role-playing, *Spirit of Excalibur* picks up where *War in Middle Earth* left off in presenting an attractive mix of gaming elements. However, it also features some flaws that may subdue a player's overall enjoyment.

Entering the Court of Camelot

The game's 256-color VGA mode offers such colorful, visually delectable screens that many players will feel they have chanced upon an open window to the glory of Camelot. This reviewer was absolutely bowled over by the festive beauty of scenes depicting the various locations visited by one's character throughout the course of the game. The artists responsible for the graphics deserve special recognition for their work. Would that this reviewer were king in order to "knight" Rob Landeros, Robert Stein III, Jonathan Sposato and Curt Toumanian.

Unfortunately, the second observation that new players will make is that the documentation seems appropriate in terms of recreating an era when most of the population was illiterate. It utterly fails to adequately provide a sense of "what to do" (i.e., what is expected of the player in order to complete the game). There is a thorough description of *how* to do things (via the game's icon-driven interface), as well as an interesting historical background and account of the myths of King Arthur. Once one has mastered the simplest mechanics of the game, all this material proves of little use in enlightening a player as to *what* to do.

Game Play

The manual divides the plot of the game into five "episodes," starting with Constantine's journey from York to Camelot to claim the throne as Arthur's successor and ending with the final confrontation between Constantine's forces and the evil sorceress Morgan le Fay. This first episode is virtually automatic, requiring a bare minimum of player input. It provides a useful tutorial for new users, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the mechanics of conversation and combat.

As the player makes his or her way to Camelot, viewing Constantine's progress on a gorgeous map of the English countryside, one will encounter various villages and towns, as well as travellers on the roads. It is a good idea to have Constantine speak with everyone he encounters, since many of the people he meets may offer important information. Treating people well is encouraged, since Constantine and the rest of the party members have Nobility levels which rise and fall depending on the fair and just behavior of the characters.

While each town and village features a guard, priest or villager to talk to, many of them allow Constantine to delve deeper into the town itself by entering a building, such as an abbey or keep. These buildings also feature characters who are more than willing to aid Constantine, and wise players will enter every building they find and entertain all offers of help.

When the player's party encounters a town, village or traveller along their journey, the player is offered a choice of entering the location/speaking with the traveller or continuing on without stopping. Entering a location switches the screen to a magnificent close-up view of the town or road. The player's party enters the screen from the left, and conversation (or, in some instances, combat) will ensue. The close-up scenes are rendered in wonder-

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ful 3-D detail and, although the on-screen characters cannot move any "deeper" into the scene, the effect is impressive. Additionally, many of the scenes have "hot zones" (for example, the sturdy wooden door in Camelot) that will move the party to other locations simply by clicking on them with the cursor.

Before arriving at Camelot, Constantine will encounter some hostile individuals who can only be dealt with via combat. When a battle begins, the screen switches into a "combat mode" that allows the player several options, such as "Attack," "Defend" and "Withdraw." Combat is of the real-time variety, so players will initially find themselves scrambling to issue commands as the computer hacks away at its own intrepid pace. The battles during the first episode aren't difficult at all, so the player may easily defeat his or her adversaries simply by clicking on "Attack" over and over. Using these easy battles to familiarize oneself with the commands is definitely recommended.

The real-time aspect of combat adds a degree of difficulty that this reviewer found displeasing. Until one becomes familiar with the various commands on the menu (which appears above the screen showing the battle), considerable time is spent searching through the menus for the appropriate commands. Meanwhile, the computer-controlled opponent is slashing and/or casting spells with great abandon and the character all too often suffers

serious damage in the meantime. While many enjoy the challenge of this type of combat scheme, this reviewer found it needlessly frustrating in *Spirit of Excalibur*.

Once Constantine reaches Camelot and presides over the Round Table, the easy part is over and events are dropped into the player's hands. From the manual and from conversations with the local populace, the player will discover that a Scottish army, led by one of the late Sir Mordred's sons, is threatening the realm to the north. Thus, the player is encouraged to send some men northward in order to obtain information about the hostile force. Yet, the computer does not display the Scottish army on the map. Worse, the player has no idea how far north to venture, nor how many men to send.

A more pressing (and local) threat after Constantine arrives in Camelot is the army of Saxons who are attacking London. Constantine must defeat them; he has enough forces in the area to do so, if only he can join together with the London garrison. How to do this, however, is a mystery and the player must figure this one out on his or her own (if it is indeed possible). There is no logical reason that Constantine's forces cannot join with the London garrison, but for some inexplicable reason the computer forbids such an alliance. Thus, Constantine must face the opposing forces alone and he will be killed. Of course, the death of Constantine ends the game.

This kind of information should have been included somewhere in the documentation, but its absence simply adds confusion to an already complex game. The information provided for the search for Lancelot is equally vague and ultimately frustrating.

Another general problem with the game is that the computer does not inform the player when one episode has been completed and the next begins. This leads to more ambiguity in the sense that the player is never really notified when he or she has completed all of the given tasks for a specific episode. At the very least, a message informing players of their progress would have been extremely helpful.

So the activities in *Spirit of Excalibur* basically revolve around wandering the countryside, talking to anyone and everyone, making attempts at achieving the goals laid down by the storyline and battling hostile factions in order to muster support for the realm. Eventually, Constantine will need to call upon the services of magic-users, especially when battling dragons, demons and the dreaded Morgan Le Fay herself.

Final Words

While many of the comments above may seem negative, they should be taken as observations with regard to *Spirit of Excalibur*'s style of gameplay. The designers have taken a relaxed, "let the players figure things out for themselves" approach, which is commendable (as this reviewer is sure that there are many gamers out there who would appreciate this product). There is a good deal of play value here for gamers who are willing to struggle past the game's considerable hurdles.

However, this reviewer found *Spirit of Excalibur* to be far too vague. This is unfortunate, since the game is a technical wonder and has great potential for success in both action and storytelling. Perhaps improved documentation (both in printed form and from the game itself) would help propel *Spirit of Excalibur* into the ranks of today's greatest fantasy games. As it stands at the present, however, *Spirit of Excalibur* will be considered as confusing to most players as Merlin's lessons (whereby he caused Arthur to metamorphose into common animals) must have been to the boy king. **CGW**

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Letters From Paradise

Copy Infection

As a first-time reader of your magazine, I was pleased by the quality of your publication and the depth of your articles. You have obviously spent a great deal of time thinking out the format of the publication as well as playing the games and listening to the readers.

I must say that I find your reviews informative but lacking. There's no question you've spent time playing the games and talking to the creators, but to ignore the issues of copy protection and, specifically, the type of copy protection, is completely negligent of your responsibility to your readers.

Since I am a first-time reader, I admit to not knowing what your policy is regarding copy protection. However, as a consumer, I would like it known that there are certain copy protection schemes I can live with and there are others that would negatively influence my decision to buy the product. I will not, for example, buy any game that alters the formatting on the hard disk. Key disks might be acceptable, but any scheme which I feel may in any way interfere with my hard disk backup or defragmentation routines has already imposed a price that I am unwilling to pay.

I can live with documentation checks where those checks are not too obtrusive. Those that ask for the third word in the fourth paragraph of the twenty-seventh page are really imposing a penalty on legitimate owners. Why should I have to go on a password quest even before my game quest begins? Some documentation checks pose more of a challenge than the game itself.

Also, high on my list of not-to-buys are those schemes which require identification of some pattern on a separate sheet of paper. Worse yet, if that page cannot be photocopied. While I understand the distributors' desire not to have the key page photocopied, I admit being able to recall at least once or twice in my life where I have lost a single sheet of paper (especially when the kids play the game too). I'm sure the distributors don't think it is possible to lose a single sheet of paper since they will duly ignore requests for a new key page, even from registered owners.

This leads to the next problem with documentation checks. It used to be you had to back up your software so as not to damage the master disk. This was and is considered prudent behavior. Now one must also back up the documentation as well since the loss or destruction of any portion of the manuals will also prevent the usage of the software. What good is the software if you can't get into it or use it? Will the publisher replace the key documentation to the registered users if it's lost? If not, what good is registration? Is registration useful for something other than junk mail from the distributor?

I understand the publishers' need to protect their rights, but not everyone who has a copy of their software is a pirate. It is the height of arrogance to treat the legitimate owners of the software as though they have acquired the product illegally. While I respect the rights of the authors and distributors, I resent the presumption of guilt placed upon the legal owners. I will therefore continue to limit my buying decisions to those games which are both amusing to play as well as unobtrusive to get started. I find your omission as to the type of copy protection scheme employed in a game to be a serious flaw in an otherwise excellent review. Since my buying decisions are influenced by the protection scheme employed, I find I am unable to make an informed decision based solely on your review. To this extent, you have failed in your efforts to fully inform me, in an otherwise excellent publication.

Charles Silbergleith
(No city given)

I maintain that computer companies have the responsibility to find a balance in their use of copy protection. If they don't, they'll alienate the honest majority of supporters.

An example, to me, of *bad* copy protection: I just bought the new game *Midwinter* from Microprobe. Even though they removed (finally) their on-disk copy protection, they still have a pretty paranoid document check; you have to search through a 200-page manual for the name of the person whose picture comes on the screen. That takes a long time. So, okay, but here's the kicker... Once you've done it, *they ask you to do it again!* I mean, come *on!* You've already proven beyond a reasonable doubt that you own the game—they just want to hit you one more time for the hell of it! Then, on top of that, they tell you that you won't be able to play the game without in-depth use and understanding of the manual. So, why not just drop the document check and consider anyone playing the game *without* the manual a demo player? If the game is good, they'll get hooked and want to own it, right? And the game *is* good. But, it's *still* going back to where I bought it tomorrow because I *will not* be made to feel so mistrusted in my own home.

To me it's really pretty simple. Be good to people. Do good work. They'll show you they appreciate it. If some rip you off, you still have the support of the great many. A lot of *great* software has been sold this way and it's the way every other entertainment medium operates.

Charles Carr
PRODIGY user

Thanks, Charles and Charles. We are concerned about copy protection, as well, but do not believe it should be a major purchasing criterion. We do men-



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tion copy protection when we find it particularly offensive or particularly interesting in terms of how it blends into the game. As noted in the April 1991 editorial (CGW #81), our readers despise both "key disk" and "look up" protection that uses "non-reproducible" paper. We have urged the publishers to move away from that type of copy protection. If we can, at least, succeed in this area, we believe that it will no longer be necessary to mention the protection in a review.

Long Time Passing

I enjoy reading your magazine a great deal. The articles in it provide information on many computer games as well as making interesting reading, even if I'll never buy the product. There are a few problems with the magazine, which is why I'm writing.

The primary problem is the fact that the articles don't always cover cutting-edge products. For example, in your December issue, the game *Final Fantasy* was reviewed. This game was admitted to be several years out of date because it is from Japan. When at all possible, articles should be about products that are liable to be extremely popular and/or contain totally new concepts. Examples of this include *Ultima VI*, *Summitry* and *Populous*. There are probably wargames and simulations that would be examples of this, too. Obviously, not all articles can be about cutting-edge products and makers of games that aren't perfect shouldn't be discouraged, but out-of-date games like *Final Fantasy* just don't need reviews.

My second problem is with the layout of the pages that contain game ratings by the readers. The games in the hall of fame don't have any information about them listed. This means that the games that people are most likely to buy have no information about them listed. Also, I think some of the games listed may no longer be produced. I don't think *M.U.L.E.* is still made (if it is, I'd like to know where to get a copy for the Atari ST). Finally, I think the games rated should be put in separate categories, like they used to be. A flight simulator should not be compared to a role-playing game. With the current method it is possible for the top game in a particular category to not be in the top ten, just because the sort of people who play that type of game tend to give lower ratings. Game players are going to be discouraged from playing a particular category of game if none of them were well-rated.

I hope you make some of the changes I have suggested. If, due to cost, difficulty or a decrease in the quality of the magazine that would be caused by a change, you don't make them, I will understand.

Paul Dickinson
Tucson, AZ

We try to be as topical as possible. If companies get the games to us promptly, it still takes, logistically, two to three months in order to get coverage in the magazine. If companies get the games to us before they are released, we often write sneak previews that indicate what the games should be like (they are not always finished when we look at them in advance).

The "Hall of Fame" is placed on the Top 100 Games page as a frame of reference for those who have been around computer games for a time. They reflect games which were/are great and have been so rated by our readers over a significant period of time. Many of them cannot be purchased because they are out of print.

As for splitting the games into categories, that is a "no win" proposition. We would have at least six different categories and some games would not really fit into any of the six. Since so many games in the present market are hybrids of two or more categories, we feel such a separation would be less, *not more useful.*

Kilobyte Was Here

I would like to suggest an M. Evan Brooks-type rating article for WWII and newer eras. Brooks' October 1990 article was one that was/is the most useful to me. Keep up the good work.

Bob Koestler
Hasbrouck Heights, NJ

I have bought your magazine off the newsstand for years. The October 1990 issue of CGW was the issue that finally convinced me to subscribe. I thought that your "Hits and Misses for Strategy Gamers" was an excellent article. One question: have you, or will you in the future do the same for 20th-century strategy games?

Also, the "Over There" report is well done. I spent three years in the UK, which has a large selection of good software (it's just hard to get in the US).

The icing on the cake was Mr. Sipe's article on *Red Baron*. I've thought for years that the WWI era has been neglected for too long by the computer strategy companies.

Keep up the excellent work!!!
Brent A DeBorbander
Scott AFB, IL

*Although the World War II paiktography, "Kilobyte Was Here" (CGW #37), is slightly dated, it is still the best resource for that era. Newer games like **SSI**'s* Panzer Strike, Typhoon of Steel *and* Second Front, *as well as **SSG**'s* Panzer Battles *have added to the mix, but there are many more older titles than there are new titles.*

Good R.I.D.dance

Some of the best — no — *the* best arcade action games around are being made by Psygnosis (specifically *Shadow of the Beast I & II* and *Awesome*). Yet, I haven't even had a chance to rate them on the R.I.D. cards. Might this have something to do with the fact that they make games exclusively for the Amiga? Please set me straight.

Weyland Walton
Draper, UT

When rated, games must reach a certain number of responses to be included in the Top 100 list. We have not tried to rate any Psygnosis games since May of 1990 because they were not getting sufficient responses. However, now that they are no longer solely publishing Amiga and Atari ST games, we are sure the responses will increase and we expect to try again.

Gospel According To *CGW*

I read with interest the Bible reference on your editorial page of your 2/91 issue (Psalms 9:1-2).

Is this a Christian witness, a religious mole in your organization or something else entirely? Please satisfy my curiosity.

Larry P. Stieglitz
Medford, OR

Nothing as insidious as a religious conspiracy is involved here. Basically, the senior editorial staff places the scripture reference in every issue as an unobtrusive way to share our personal goals of glorifying God in everything that we do. The scripture is a poetic song of praise in both the Judaic and Christian tradition and suggests what we believe is a very positive perspective on life. Readers should not worry, however; we don't intend to sell shares in a CGW theme park/resort. **cgw**

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A = Excellent
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(List the appropriate number)

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1 = Under 14 years old
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6 = 36-40 years old
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2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in descending order of use).

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5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
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9 = Other (specify)

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2 = 2-5 hours
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4. Do you regularly read the editorial in *Computer Gaming World*? (Y/N)

Games

5. Obitus (Psygnosis)
6. Silent Service II (Microprose)
7. Universal Military Simulator II (Microplay)
8. Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge (Konami)
9. Knights of the Sky (Microprose)
10. Wings (Cinemaware)
11. Air Strike USA (Spotlight)
12. Eye of the Beholder (SSI)
13. The Lord of the Rings (Interplay)
14. Ultima V (Origin)
15. Hard Nova (Electronic Arts)
16. Quest for Glory II: Trial by Fire (Sierra)
17. Red Baron (Dynamix)
18. The Immortal (Electronic Arts)
19. Red Storm Rising (Microprose)
20. Fleet Med (Simulations Canada)
21. Wizardry: Bane of Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech)
22. Lemmings (Psygnosis)
23. Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
24. Nightbreed (Ocean)
25. Powermonger (Electronic Arts)
26. The Untouchables (Ocean)
27. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
28. Second Front (Strategic Studies, Inc.)
29. Populous (Electronic Arts)
30. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
31. Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
32. SimCity (Maxis)
33. Ultima VI (Origin)
34. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
35. M-1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)
36. Warlords (Strategic Studies Group)
37. Space Ace (ReadySoft, Inc.)
38. Wing Commander (Origin)

Articles

39. Das Boot Review
40. Their Finest Hour Strategy
41. Might & Magic III Preview
42. One Saved Game Blues
43. Just Another War in Space Review
44. Battle Chess II Review
45. Fireteam 2200 Review
46. Elvira Review
47. Scorpion's Tale (Bane Hints)
48. Obitus Review
49. Dungeon Master II Review
50. Baseball Manager Preview
51. Real Blackjack Review
52. The Immortal Review
53. Spirit of Excalibur Review
54. Covert Action Review
55. Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs Review
56. Taking A Peek
57. This issue *overall*
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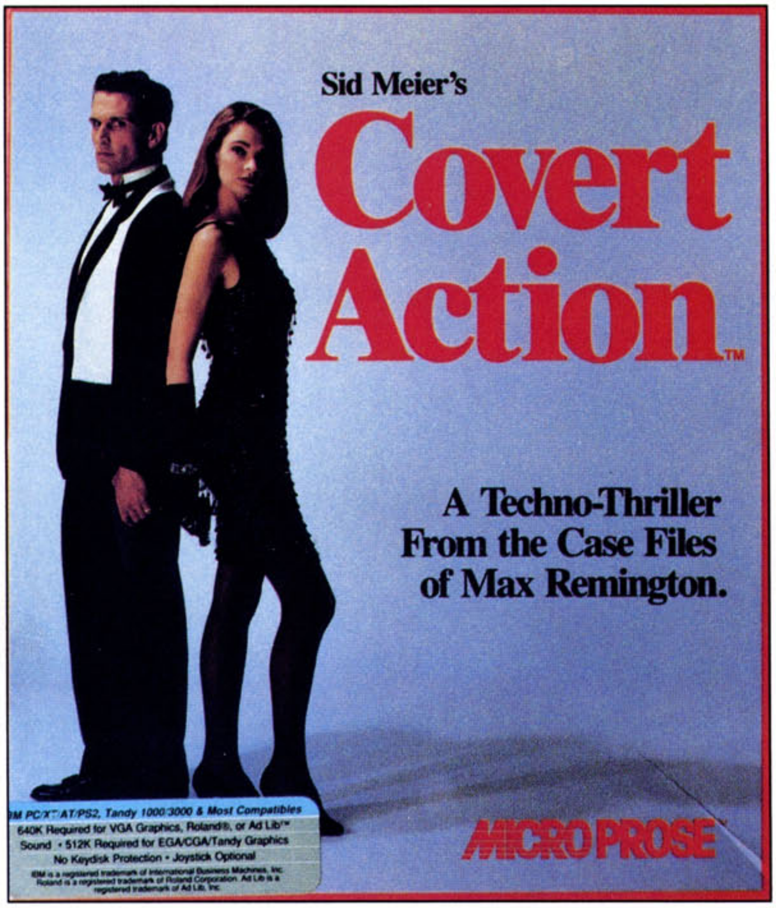


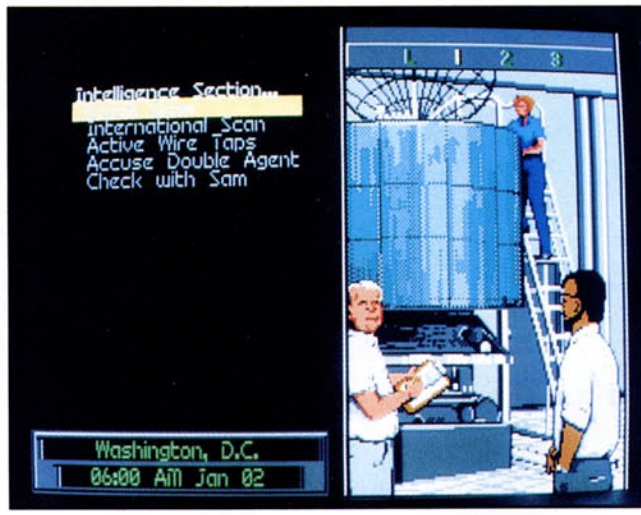
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Ardai Admires Meier's Spies

Microprose's Covert Action

by Charles Ardai





A spy would be fortunate to work for Sid Meier's CIA. Imagine: an almost endless stream of interesting assignments; an opportunity to work with the world's most sophisticated espionage technology; bureau heads who are cooperative and who willingly stay out of an agent's hair; a legal system which convicts international criminals even when their arrests are tantamount to kidnaping (can you say 'Noriega'?); free travel to fifty cities around the world; and, best of all, never having to kill anyone. Who could ask for anything more?

Sid Meier's latest creation, *Covert Action*, is a complex and detailed espionage simulation, encompassing many of the subtleties of cross-cultural criminology. It is remarkable that Meier and his crew (notably co-designer Bruce Shelley) have managed to cram so much onto four disks, since the game contains more hidden facets than many six- or eight-disk games. *Covert Action* is like a Ringling Brothers clown car: surprises keep coming out and one wonders how so many could fit in such a small space.

Indeed, if the game has one flaw it is this, that so much comes at the player so quickly. It is possible for one to overload on information at several points, not least of which is when one opens the ninety-six page instruction manual. However, one can hardly

TITLE:	Covert Action
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNERS:	Sid Meier and Bruce Shelley
PUBLISHER:	Microprose Hunt Valley, MD

criticize a game for offering players too much, especially at a time when so many games offer so little.

Covert Action is ambitious. Indeed, it is more than ambitious, it is successful. It may not be to everyone's taste — gamers cut from the 007 mold may prefer a more exotic, less fact-based spy story — but for intelligent gamers looking for a real challenge, *Covert Action* will be a treat.

Overt Action

Using words like "intelligent" and "challenge," one runs the risk of scaring away gamers who are primarily looking for action in a spy game, especially from one whose name includes the *word* 'action.' Such gamers need not fear. *Covert Action* has as much action as the average Clint Eastwood movie — it's just that it also has plenty of mind-twisting brainwork for the player to do when all the pulse-pounding legwork brings results.

So a player will go, within minutes, from a breakneck car chase or shootout to infiltrating a terrorist's lair incognito. Then, move swiftly to the very different (but no less vital) work of the CIA's cryptography lab. Running around like a juggler with a dozen balls in the air, the player has to deal with unforseen events and changing variables under tight deadlines. It is this endless variety that makes *Covert Action* so enjoyable. There is always something new to be done.

Technically, there are only four elements to the game: breaking and entering, wiretapping, cryptography and car chases. Each of these, however, encompasses a wide range of activities, objectives and obstacles, and the four elements are combined in a variety of ways. Adding complexity to the equation, assignments are available at four difficulty levels ranging from "Local Disturbance" to "Global Crisis." Adding further variety to the equation, one nice touch is that the player's character, Max Remington, can be either "Maximilian" or "Maxine" and another is that the character has player-adjusted skills in all four activities. Then, too, there are twenty-six different criminal masterminds opposing Max, each with dozens of distinct plots for the player to unravel. It should be easy to see why the game never becomes boring.

Covert Action will probably outlast most players. Only a dedicated few will plug away at it until all its secrets are revealed. Yet for all this complexity, gameplay within any one sequence is fairly simple. Car chases involve maneuvering on a pair of strategic maps while maintaining line-of-sight contact in a first-person window. Breaking and entering involves suiting up with high-tech weapons and surveillance devices and then exploring a building in the manner of *The Punisher*. Function keys access Max's Uzi, his camera, his grenades, his bugs and whatever else the player has decided to carry.

The intelligence portions of the game are similarly well-designed. Cryptography, for instance, consists of decoding substitution ciphers. The procedure, though difficult to describe, is wonderfully compact: one keys in a letter in the cipher and then the letter one thinks it represents. The computer does all the substitution and, bit by bit, a message in English is constructed out of gibberish. This is much more entertaining than it sounds.

Planting wiretaps involves switching chips on a circuit board to reroute the flow of current so that one gains access to telephone lines without tripping any alarms. (Here, the gameplay most closely resembles one of the last games ever released for the **Colecovison**, Thomas Fulton's *2010, The Graphic Action Game*.) This is also more fun than it sounds.

Indeed, Sid Meier's genius lies in dreaming up stylized, out-of-the-ordinary play mechanics which are hard to describe and are more fun than they sound and combining them with fascinating storytelling, as he does here. *Covert Action* is fun to play at first just to get used to the odd gameplay and the complicated interplay of game elements; but it remains fun to play after one has mastered the gameplay because the crimes one has to solve are, without exception, interesting.

It is indicative of the care put into the game that even in the practice mode, the coded messages one decodes are *interesting* messages. There are no two-bit capers for Max Remington. Each plot is carefully conceived, involves at least half a dozen participants and centers around such important topics as assassination, theft of national secrets and world war. Meier and Shelley keep players on their toes down to the wire; and when, at the end of each case, they recount the plot in detail, even the best players will often be caught by surprise.

Individual cases take at least half an hour to solve, but they are addictive. Like potato chips, one session with *Covert Action*

makes a player hungry for more. After a few dozen cases this effect may wear off, but if so, this reviewer hasn't found out yet.

Meier's Mires

For all this, however, the game does have problems, and it would not be fair not to prepare players for them. None is substantial enough to interfere seriously with one's enjoyment of the game, but all are irritating and should really have been fixed before release.

First, the instruction manual is such a substantial tome that almost no one is likely to have the stamina to read it before starting play. Unfortunately, the text is so poorly organized and written that it is hard to find what one is looking for even when one knows what that is, much less when one is not certain of what is being sought. Compounding the problem is the fact that the text has been inadequately proofread. Worst of all, the book is peppered with tiresome narrative passages in italics which purport to tell Max's story as though in excerpts from a novel. These are best skipped. Wading through this morass of prose to find specific instructions on how to play the game is a chore. Happily, the game's mechanics are natural enough that a little trial and error (plus the game's self-explanatory menus and a handy reference card) pretty much solve the problem.

A more serious problem is that when information is acquired during a break-in (generally through photographs of a desk's or a safe's contents), the game stops short to display the information in clue-file form. The game's clue files are thoroughly cross-referenced, which is very useful when one needs to find a particular bit of information in a desperate moment; but the middle of a break-in is no time for the game to interrupt itself with a complete run-down. One might take a photo of a desk drawer and then spend the next three minutes pressing 'Enter' as the game cycles through all the permutations involved in cross-referencing the new clue with previously obtained information. Of course, the player doesn't bother to read the torrent of information being displayed — he wants to get on with the break-in — but he is still forced to sit through this entire display each time he takes a photo or listens in on a conversation. A much better system would have been for the game to announce the content of each clue in one or two sentences, and to save the cross-referencing for later.

Also under the heading of "Too Much All at Once" is the overabundance of choices. As noted above, this is an unusual complaint, but there is no denying that it can be frustrating to have dozens of choices on a half-dozen menus and not know what to do first. For the most part, one does the same things over and over, and this leaves one gazing longingly at the many actions one hasn't had a chance to perform: work with the Israeli Mossad, travel to Hungary, plant a car tracer and so forth. Until the choices actually come into play in one or another of the cases, one is left in the position of a hungry man at a buffet, not knowing what to take and what, regretfully, to leave untasted.

On an entirely different level, there is the dicey problem of realism and topicality. Meier wants to make *Covert Action* both realistic and topical, but he keeps pulling back, apparently as a sop to the "Games Ruin Young Minds Brigade" and various Anti-Defamation Leagues. On one hand, for instance, one gets to use real-world weapons; but on the other one is told that "the rounds [they] fire...are a recent, secret development that stun the target rather than penetrate." Nonsense! Uzis kill people and spies kill people. To dance around this fact (the graphics certainly seem to indicate killing) is condescending and insulting.

Another example is that while the Mafia is called the Mafia in the game (possible offense to Italian Americans being ignored), the PLO is here known as the the "PFO" (Palestinian *Freedom* Organization) and the PIRA is known as the "PIFA" (Provisional Irish Freedom Army). Who do the designers think they are fooling? Instead of this disingenuous game of peekaboo, Meier should have given some attention to the fact that out of twenty-six villains, eighteen are black, hispanic or Middle-Eastern. This may correlate with real CIA "most wanted" profiles, but it may also strengthen or lend credence to a player's own prejudicial stereotypes. Normally, one wouldn't mention this in a review at all, but it is strange to find a game that is hypersensitive on some points and strikingly insensitive on others.

Covert Convert

None of the observations just cited alters the fact that *Covert Action* is entertaining in the extreme. There are very few games that offer as much as this one does or which so completely cover their subject. Rarer still are games which do so without becoming crashing bores or requiring all sorts of specialized knowledge. *Covert Action* belongs on a short list of games along with such inspired work as *The Fool's Errand* and *Starflight*. In each case the designers combined excellence with diversity to create a top-notch game.

Covert Action could be better, but not much. It is no exaggeration to say that Microprose has released the richest treatment of espionage ever put in a computer game. Only the real thing could be more rigorous, and one imagines that it wouldn't be nearly so much fun. **CGW**

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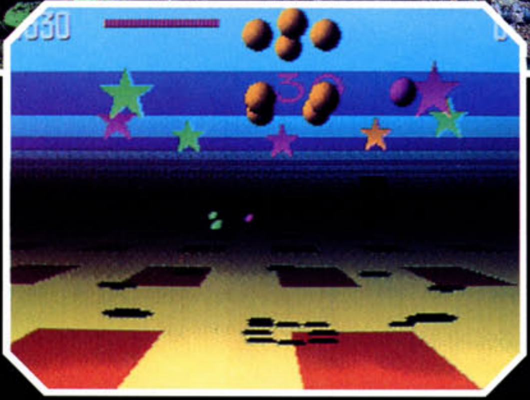
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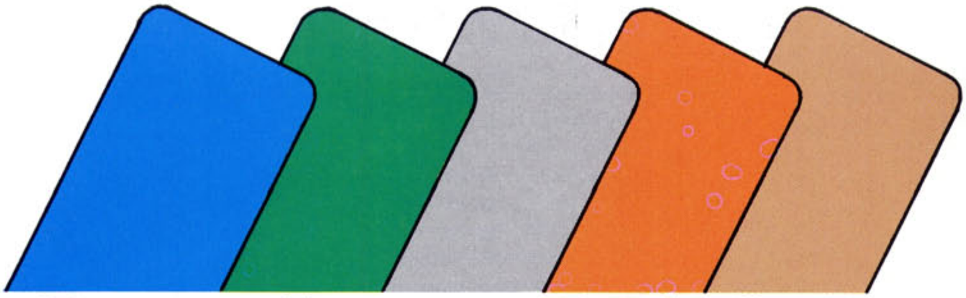
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Creating a Rainbow Coalition

State of the Industry: Many software publishers have performed a positive service for retailers, consumers and busy editors by color-coding the appropriate system supported on their packages. IBM products are easy to find on nearly any shelf because nearly 90% of the industry use some form of sky-blue label on their MS-DOS packages (presumably a tribute to IBM's identity as "Big Blue"), even if it is only a blue strip at the top of a predominantly gray label. Other formats are not identified with quite such a significant consensus.

There is also something of a *de facto* standardization with Amiga products among many publishers using a brown or beige label or strip on those products. Likewise, Macintosh products see a significant number of publishers using a pure gray label. However, if the industry were to standardize color-coding for all consumer platforms, it could feasibly lead to improved inventory handling in the retail channel.

We readily admit that the larger chains utilize electronic inventory programs to check their stock, but we think there would be a definite advantage for sales personnel to be able to glance quickly at a shelf and note whether all of the formats were available or not. It has been our experience that once a product is "out of sight" with many retailers, it is "out of mind." Color-coding would serve as a constant mnemonic device as to stock on hand in each format, particularly in smaller stores where products are in limited enough supply that they must be displayed spine outward. This might even help some retailers to understand that a *conversion* is usually something *new*, even though the title has been out on another platform for a long time.

In the same way, consumers would be able to ascertain the relative support for their machines in a given store without having to undergo a detailed perusal. For example, an Amiga gamer drops into a software store to pick up the new golf game, *Debased Fore*. Waiting in line at the check-out stand, he glances at an adjacent shelf where a flight simulator (*C-5A Transport Pilot*) that went gold on the MS-DOS format is displayed. This time, however, he notes the brown label that indicates the program has been converted to Amiga. Having already mentally "crossed the Rubicon" and committed to spending some money on computer games today, he immediately walks over to the shelf and picks up the Amiga version of *C-5A* and purchases it along with the golf program. This *does* happen, but it is *more* likely to happen with standardized color-coding.

In fact, if we may be so bold, we even have a suggested color scheme for the industry, based on labels already in use (but not standardized). We would like to see Apple II (8-bit) programs with red labels (red is for apple), IIGS programs with violet labels (think of it as off-red), Amiga in light brown (tan, beige), Atari ST in dark green, Commodore 64/128 in orange, MS-DOS in blue and Macintosh in gray (after all, they were originally black and white).

We feel that the small amount of effort and resources it would cost manufacturers in future products would help everyone touched by computer games. From the clerks in the warehouses, through the distribution chain, across the editorial plain and right down to the eager clutches of consumers, system/color standardization is an idea whose time is here. The question is, are software publishers visionary marketers or colorblind reactionaries? We're just waiting for the light to turn green. CGW

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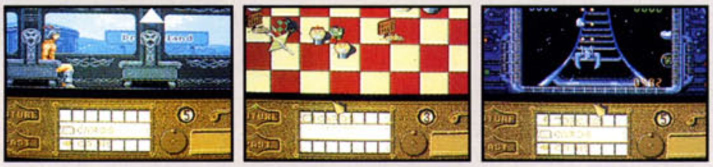
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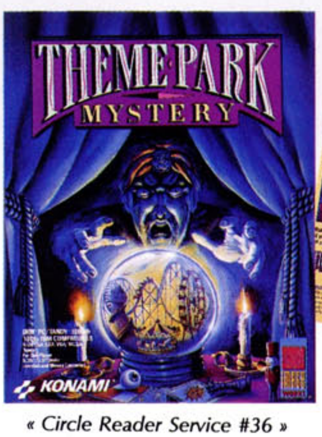
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